

18138

HOW WARS ARE GOT UP IN INDIA.

THE ORIGIN

OF

THE BURMESE WAR.

BY

RICHARD COBDEN, ESQ., M.P.

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P R E F A C E.

HAVING had occasion to read with attention the "Papers relating to Hostilities with Burmah," with the view of bringing the subject under the consideration of the House, (which circumstances prevented my doing) I have made an abstract of the leading facts of the case for publication, in the hope that it may induce the reader to peruse the original correspondence. This I was the more immediately tempted to do, from not having been able to meet with anybody, in or out of Parliament, who had read the "Papers." In fact, owing to the complex form in which they are printed—not giving letter and answer in consecutive order, but grouping them arbitrarily in batches—they require a considerable effort of the attention to read them with advantage. I may say, by way of explanation, that the whole of the narrative is founded, exclusively, upon the Parliamentary papers, and that all the extracts in the text, for which references are given at the foot of each page, are copied from the same official source.—Wherever I have inserted quotations not taken from the Parliamentary papers they are printed as notes. It should be borne in mind that the case, such as it is, is founded upon our own *exparte* statement. A great many of the letters are mutilated; and remembering, that in the Afghan papers, it is now known that the character of at least one of the Cabool chiefs was sacrificed^{*} by a most dishonest garbling of his language, I confess I am not

without suspicions that a similar course may have been pursued in the present instance. I will only add, then, bad as our case now appears, what would it be if we could have access to the Burmese "Blue Books," stating their version of the business?

The correspondence to which I have referred is—

1st. Papers relating to hostilities with Burmah, presented to both Houses of Parliament, June 4th, 1852.

2nd. Further Papers relating to hostilities with Burmah, presented to both Houses of Parliament, March 15th, 1853.

HOW WARS ARE GOT UP IN INDIA.

In June, 1851, the British barque *Monarch*, of 250 tons, last from Moulmein, reached Rangoon, the principal port of the Burmese empire. On the second day after her arrival, Captain SHEPPARD, the master and owner, "was taken before the police to answer the charge of having, during the voyage, thrown overboard the pilot Esopur, preferred by a man named HAJIM, a native of Chittagong, who stated that he was brother of the said pilot."* The accuser and the deceased were British subjects, both being natives of Chittagong, one of the provinces of our Indian empire, lying contiguous to the territory of Burmah. The answer to the accusation was, that the pilot having run the vessel aground, had jumped overboard. Captain SHEPPARD was mulcted in fines and fees to the amount of £46., and permission was then given him to depart; but when about to sail he was again detained, "owing to a charge brought by a man named DEWAN ALLI, (a British subject, employed in one of the Moulmein gun-boats), calling himself a brother of the pilot, bringing forward a claim for a sum of 500 rupees, which he stated his brother had taken with him."† This led to a fresh exaction of £55.;—and, after a forcible detention altogether of eight days, the ship was allowed to sail.

The British vessel, the *Champion*, of 410 tons, Captain LEWIS, arrived at Rangoon, from the Mauritius, in August, 1851. Two Bengal coolies, who had secreted themselves on board his ship, with a view to return to their country, made charges against the captain of murder and other offences, and they were joined by some lascars and others of the crew, who deserted, and made an appeal to the authorities for the recovery

* Papers relating to hostilities with Burmah, presented to Parliament June 4, 1852, p. 5.

† Ibid.

of their wages. After being detained fifteen days, and compelled to forfeit £70. for fines, fees, and seamen's wages, Captain LEWIS was suffered to depart.

These two captains appealed to the Government of India for redress. They claimed together, £1920. for reimbursement of arbitrary fines, demurrage of ships, and compensation for ill-usage, and unlawful imprisonment. This claim was revised by the Indian authorities, and cut down to £920., or less than one-half; and it was in enforcing payment of this sum that the present war arose.

It must be borne in mind that all the parties to these suits were British subjects; the governor of Rangoon, had not been adjudicating in matters in which Burmese interests, as opposed to those of foreigners were at stake.

When these complaints were laid before the Governor-General of India, it happened that two of the Queen's ships, the *Fox*, and the *Serpent*, under the command of Commodore LAMBERT, were lying in the Hooghly. He was requested to proceed to Rangoon, and "in maintenance of the Treaty of Yandaboo, and the Commercial Treaty of 1826, to demand full reparation for the injuries and oppressions to which the above-named British subjects have been exposed." No other demand for reparation beyond the payment of this sum of about £920. appears at the outset of these proceedings. Vague allusions are made to other acts of injustice committed upon British subjects, but no specific complaint is formally made, and no individual grievances are officially adduced, excepting those of Captains SHEPPARD and LEWIS. We are informed, indeed, in a Minute, by the Governor-General of India, that "for many years past, complaints, from time to time, had been made of acts of oppression and of violation of treaty by the Burmese Governors. *None, however, had been brought forward of sufficient extent or significance, to call for the formal notice of this government.*"* It is important at the outset, to have the highest authority for the fact, that, up to this time, the Burmese authorities at Ava, were quite ignorant that the British government had any complaint to prefer against the Governors of Rangoon.

Before his departure from Calcutta, Commodore LAMBERT

received very precise instructions from the Governor-General, how to act under almost every possible contingency; and as these directions were disregarded the moment he reached Rangoon, without drawing on himself a word of censure or remonstrance, thus involving grave questions, as to the due assertion of authority on one side, and the observance of professional subordination on the other, I beg the reader's careful attention to this part of the narrative. It will, moreover, serve to illustrate the unsatisfactory working of the "double government" of India.

After recapitulating all the facts of the cases of Captains SHEPPARD and LEWIS, and requesting Commodore LAMBERT to proceed to demand reparation from the Governor of Rangoon, Lord DALHOUSIE suggests, that "although there seems no reason to doubt the accuracy of the depositions, or the veracity of the deponents,"* it would be right that the Commodore should in the first instance be satisfied on this head."† He is then requested to demand from the Governor of Rangoon the just pecuniary compensation in favour of the injured parties. *Should that functionary refuse redress* (mark the proviso), the Commodore is then to forward to the King of Burmah, at Ava, the capital, a letter, with which he is furnished from the Government of India, calling his Majesty's attention to the subject, "in the full conviction that he will at once condemn the conduct of his officers by whom this offence has been perpetrated, and will make to the parties who have been injured that compensation which is most justly due to them for the injuries they have sustained."‡ So minute are the instructions given to the Commodore, by Lord DALHOUSIE, that the mode of forwarding the letter to Ava, and the proper way of disposing of his squadron during the necessary delay in receiving an answer, are carefully pointed out in these terms:—

"In the event of the Governor of Rangoon refusing, or evading compliance with the demands conveyed to him by the Commodore, the letter addressed by the President in Council to the King should be delivered by the Commodore to the Governor of Rangoon for transmission to Ava, accompanied by an intimation that an early reply from the Court of Ava will be expected; and that, if,

* Why, then, reduce the claim to less than one-half?

† P. 13.

‡ Ibid.

it should not in due time be received, the Government of India will proceed to take such measures as they may think necessary and right.

“The delay thus interposed is unavoidable in the present anomalous relations of the two governments. *It will, moreover, admit of the Commodore proceeding to the Persian Gulf, whither his Lordship understands he is under orders to proceed.*”*

The Governor-General’s instructions conclude with the following emphatic injunction, to avoid any violent proceedings; it might have been penned expressly to guard against the course which the Commodore afterwards pursued:—“**IT IS TO BE DISTINCTLY UNDERSTOOD THAT NO ACT OF HOSTILITY IS TO BE COMMITTED AT PRESENT, THOUGH THE REPLY OF THE GOVERNOR SHOULD BE UNFAVOURABLE, NOR UNTIL DEFINITE INSTRUCTIONS REGARDING SUCH HOSTILITIES SHALL BE GIVEN BY THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA.**”†

Let us now recapitulate in the briefest possible terms, the instructions given to Commodore **LAMBERT** :—

1st. He was requested to inquire on the spot, whether the compensation claimed by Captains **SHEPPARD** and **LEWIS**, which had already been reduced to less than one-half of their original demand by the Indian Government, was founded in justice :—in a word, he was instructed to hear both sides.

2nd. To demand payment of the amount of compensation from the Governor of Rangoon, before applying to the Court of Ava; and to use the letter addressed to the King only, “in the event of the Governor refusing or evading compliance.” ‡

3rd. In case it was found necessary to forward the letter to the King, then the Commodore was to proceed to the Persian Gulf.

4th. In no case, until further definite instructions should be received from the Government of India, was any act of hostility to be committed.

We shall see under what circumstances Commodore **LAMBERT**, set aside all these instructions, and pursued the very opposite course to that prescribed by the Governor-General.

Towards the end of November, 1851, the Commodore sailed

* P. 14.

† Ibid.

‡ Ibid.

with his squadron from Calcutta for the Rangoon River. The distance by sea, between the ports of Calcutta and Rangoon, is about 500 miles. On his arrival at the latter place, several of the residents,* who claimed to be British subjects, preferred further complaints against the Governor of Rangoon. He requested them to state their grievances in writing, which they did on the 28th November;† but on the 27th, *before a written declaration was in his hands*, (it is important to notice this, as the beginning of a series of impulsive and precipitate acts), he wrote to the Governor of Rangoon to the following effect.‡

“ COMMODORE LAMBERT TO THE GOVERNOR OF RANGOON.

“ *On board Her Britannic Majesty's ship of war Fox,
at anchor off Rangoon, November 27th, 1851.*

“ The object of my visit to Rangoon was, at the request of the Most Noble the Marquis of DALHOUSIE, the Governor-General of British India, to demand redress for insults and injuries you have committed on subjects belonging to Her Britannic Majesty Queen VICTORIA.

“ Since my arrival, so many more complaints have been made by persons residing at Rangoon, who have a right to claim British protection, that I have deemed it my duty to withhold my original demand, until I have again made known their complaints to his Lordship.”

It might naturally be expected that after dispatching this letter to the Governor, the writer would send one of the two steamers which, in addition to his own vessel, the *Fox*, now composed the squadron under his command, to Calcutta, for further orders. This was much too dilatory a mode of proceeding. On the very next

* The first person who came on board the Commodore's ship, (whose name is given in the Blue Book, and in the Parliamentary Report, but which for obvious reasons, I suppress), is thus described by Lord ELLENBOROUGH:—
“ One of the most considerable traders at Rangoon, is a person of the name of _____. That man, as soon as he knew of the probability of a war, freighted a schooner with arms, and sold them to the Governor of Rangoon, when the Governor refused payment for them, he had the effrontery to go to Commodore LAMBERT, and complain of the injury inflicted upon him. I suppose we shall hereafter see the amount of compensation claimed by that person in the bill to be paid by the Burmese government. The Governor of Rangoon offered in consequence £100. for this man's head; and I confess, I should not have been deeply grieved if he had got it. This is a description of one of the persons for whom this great war is to be undertaken.”—*House of Lords, April 5th, 1852.*

† P. 25.

‡ P. 24.

day the Commodore commenced his diplomatic career, without credentials or authority of any kind, by sitting down and writing a letter to the "Prime Minister" of the King of Ava, enclosing the letter which had been entrusted to him for use, *in case the Governor had refused compliance with his demand*, and adding, that owing to the accounts he had heard, of the additional wrongs inflicted upon British subjects by the Governor, he passed him by, and appealed for his punishment directly to the Court of Ava.*

These two letters, the one from *The President of the Council of India in Council, to the King of Ava*, and the other from *Commodore Lambert to the Prime Minister of His Majesty the King of Ava*, were then forwarded to the Governor of Rangoon, with the following :—†

"COMMODORE LAMBERT TO THE GOVERNOR OF RANGOON.

"November 28th, 1851.

"I have the honour to transmit you a letter for His Majesty the King of Ava, together with one for the Prime Minister of the King.

"I shall expect that every dispatch will be used for forwarding the same, and I hold you responsible for an answer being delivered in these waters, within five weeks from this day."

Captains LATTER and TARLETON were deputed to deliver this letter to the Governor. The following is the description of the interview as given by Captain LATTER, who filled the office of interpreter to the Expedition.

"This letter was translated by me into Burmese. We landed, went to the Governor's house, escorted by some of the English residents and traders. I read aloud to the Governor, first in English, and then in Burmese, the letter, and Captain TARLETON delivered it. The Governor made his appearance in a somewhat informal dress ; being dressed in nothing but common white clothes, and smoking a cheroot ; whilst all the under Governors were in their court dresses. This was the more to be remarked, because the Governor has several gold crowns, which he wears on State occasions. The European officers were of course in full uniform. The Governor wished us to stop and sit down, but Captain TARLETON thought it more prudent to say that we had only been charged to read and deliver the letter to him, and that we had received no instructions about holding any other communication. We then bowed, withdrew, and returned to the frigate. We received no opposition either going or coming."‡

* P. 24.

† Ibid.

‡ P. 30.

From Rangoon to Ava, is about 450 miles, and Government Expresses perform the journey in from ten to twelve days, so that to receive an answer in five weeks, was quite practicable, provided the Cabinet of his Burmese Majesty did not require so long a time for deliberation as is sometimes found necessary in Europe.

As soon as he had dispatched his letter to the Governor, the Commodore sat down and wrote a laconic account of his proceedings to the Government of India, which he sent off to Calcutta, by a steamer in charge of Captain LATTER, the interpreter, who was deputed to explain the circumstances which had induced him to depart from his instructions.

Let us now see what those circumstances were :—

We have already stated, that on the arrival of the squadron in Rangoon river, an additional list of grievances was presented to the Commodore, on behalf of the British residents.* The state-

* The Earl of ELLENBOROUGH, made the following observations upon these proceedings :—(*House of Lords, February 16th, 1852.*)

“ He also wished to know whether, before any requisition was sent to the King of Ava, for reparation for the injuries inflicted on British subjects in Rangoon, any trustworthy officer of ours was sent there to ascertain the truth of their representations, and the extent of the injuries inflicted? He could recollect—it was not so distant an era—he could recollect the circumstances of a complaint which was brought under the notice of the British Government, by a certain Don Pacifico. Athens rejoiced in one Pacifico; but he could assure their lordships, that there were dozens of Pacificos at Rangoon. If there were not the grossest ignorance of, or the strongest misrepresentations about Rangoon, on the part of those who have written about it, Rangoon was the sink of Asia—the Alsatia to which all men went who could not keep a footing elsewhere. Persons of European origin, who had discovered that Asia was too hot to hold them, lived in Ava, and generally went to Rangoon, and there, under the same, or perhaps some other name, endeavoured to gain a new reputation or a new fortune. He should not wish the Government to take any political measures with regard to Ava, without sending an officer there to inquire into the circumstances. He regretted that this had not been done in the first instance; for it was reported that when the Commodore went to Rangoon with his fleet, he found circumstances very different from those which had been represented to him. The Don Pacificos pushed off their boats, and went on board with representations of the damage which they said they had sustained.”

[Commodore LAMBERT had directions to inquire into the justice of the demand, which he was sent to make upon the Governor of Rangoon; but, instead of doing so, he took for granted the truth of fresh complaints brought against that officer, and acted upon them, without allowing the accused party the opportunity of answering one or the other of the charges.]

ment professes to emanate from the "undersigned merchants and others, resident in Rangoon," but there are no signatures appended to the document, which contains a list of thirty-eight grievances, separately numbered, and mostly without dates. I am sorry that it is not compatible with that brevity, which is above all things my object, to copy every one of these cases from the Blue Book, but I will give the first four on the list, as a fair specimen of the whole:—

LIST OF GRIEVANCES.

" 1. A short time ago a charge was brought against AGA SADDUCK, merchant in this town, by his wife, who had been separated from him fifteen years. No less a sum than 5,500 rupees was extorted from him by the present Governor.

" 2. In the case of GOOLAM HUSSAIN, a merchant of Rangoon, against whom a charge was brought of alleged faithlessness of his wife, the sum of 1500 rupees was extorted from him.

" 3. In the case of GOOLAM HUSSAIN (deceased), who was the owner of some mineral said to have had the virtue of completing the art of alchemy, the Governor wanted to get the mineral, which was refused him. In consequence of this a charge of theft was trumped up against him. The unfortunate man was seized, flogged in the most cruel manner, from the effects of which he died soon after.

" 4. Against NICHOLAS JOHANNES, an Armenian merchant, a story was got up, that in a piece of ground which he had lately purchased, there was buried a jar of silver. The Government people were ordered to dig for the jar in question, when Mr. JOHANNES detected them in the act of slipping money into the jar. The Governor decreed that he should pay 1000 rupees for these proceedings of his own men."

The absurd list of grievances, of which the above are a sample, and which bring to recollection a popular volume of reports of our own police courts, called "*Mornings at Bow Street*," was, as I have before stated, placed in the hands of Captain LATTER, who proceeded to Calcutta to offer an explanation of the occurrences which had taken place at Rangoon. Arrived at his destination, he was requested to make his statement in writing, and I find in the Report presented by him to Mr. HALLDAY (the Secretary to the Government) that he gives as the reason why Commodore LAMBERT departed from the instructions laid down by the Governor-General for his guidance, that "the Commodore appeared to think that when the Governor-General of India came to know of these fresh instances of the Governor of Rangoon's misconduct, he, the

Governor-General, might not consider the taking satisfaction for merely Messrs. SHEPPARD and LEWIS's cases sufficient, but might wish to take further steps."* Let us see what the Governor-General has to say in reply.

The letter from the Government Secretary, Mr. HALLIDAY, in answer to Commodore LAMBERT's communication, has been mutilated at the Board of Control, and an *Extract*, only, appears in the Blue Book. It may be therefore charitably hoped that the scissors in Cannon Row, and not the pen of the able Secretary at *Fort William*, are responsible for the inconsistency, not to say the absurdity of its contents.

"*The statements contained*," says the *Extract*, "*in the memorial presented by the British subjects at Rangoon must be received with caution; not having been made the subject of complaint at the time, these additional cases cannot now be made the groundwork of an increased demand for compensation.*" It might naturally be supposed, that after this implied reflection upon the incautiousness of the Commodore, there would follow an expression of regret on behalf of the Governor-General at his having upon such insufficient grounds departed from the instructions laid down for his guidance; but the reader will find with astonishment the following paragraph in the same *Extract*:

"*Having regard to the additional long list which was delivered to you, of unwarrantable and oppressive acts committed upon British subjects by order of the Governor of Rangoon, as well as to the personal bearing of that functionary towards the Commodore of the squadron, and to his obvious intention of resorting to the usual policy of the Burmese Court by interposing endless delays, and disregard of official communications addressed to him; his Lordship is of opinion that you exercised a sound discretion in cutting short all discussion with the local Governor, and in transmitting at once to the King of Ava the letter addressed to His Majesty by the Government of India.*"

The logic of this is akin to that which the wolf resorted to, upon a certain occasion in an argument with the lamb. "Be cautious how you listen to those Rangoon merchants," (says Mr. HALLIDAY), "do not make their complaints the groundwork of a demand for compensation from the Governor of Rangoon: but you did right in making those complaints the "groundwork" of a resolution to

pass by the Governor of Rangoon, and send the Governor-General's letter to the Court of Ava, *asserting that he had refused all redress*, and demanding his recall." And again, for another specimen of the same logic:—"So many fresh complaints were made to me by resident merchants on my arrival in the river of Rangoon," says Commodore LAMBERT, "that I resolved to hold no communication whatever with the Governor upon the business which I came here to settle."—"You were quite right in cutting short all discussion with the local Governor," replies Mr. HALLIDAY, in the name of the Governor-General; "for it is very evident from his personal bearing towards you, and from his obvious intention to resort to the usual policy of the Burmese Court, by interposing endless delays, and disregarding official communications addressed to him, that you would have accomplished nothing by entering into negotiations with him."

Heaven defend me from ever finding myself in the position of the Governor of Rangoon, with no other appeal but to round shot and shells against the conclusions of such logicians, as the Governor-General of India, and Commodore LAMBERT!

The Commodore's brief and peremptory communication to the Governor of Rangoon, requiring him to forward to his Sovereign at Ava a letter demanding his own disgrace, and which I have given in a preceding page, is dated November 28th, 1851. An answer was demanded in five weeks. It arrived on the 1st January, being a day within the limited time. This having been the only instance in which the British Commander had preferred any request to the Governor, the promptitude of his compliance is a sufficient commentary on the passage quoted from the despatch from the Government of India, accusing him of "endless delays and disregard of official communications addressed to him." It is but fair to adduce this fact, in favour of one who now disappears from the scene, without having been heard in his own defence.

The following letter from Commodore LAMBERT, to the President of the Council of India, opens the second act in this drama:—

“ COMMODORE LAMBERT TO SIR JOHN LITTLER.

“ *H.M.S. Fox, off Rangoon, January 1st, 1852.*

“ I have the honour to acquaint you, that an officer from the Court of Ava, arrived on board of Her Majesty's ship under my command this

morning, and delivered a letter from the King to the Government of India, in reply to the letter which I forwarded on the 28th of November.

"I also had the honour of a reply from his Majesty's Minister to my communication of that date; a copy is enclosed: from the purport of which it appears the Burmese Government have dismissed the Governor of Rangoon; *and promised to settle the demand made on them by the Government of India.*

"**I AM OF OPINION THAT THE KING IS SINCERE, AND THAT HIS GOVERNMENT WILL FULLY ACT UP TO WHAT HE HAS PROMISED.**

"The future Governor of Rangoon, vested with full powers to settle the demands, is daily expected from Prome.

"In order that the Governor-General of India may be informed, as early as possible, of the state of affairs, I have dispatched the *Tenasserim* steam-vessel to Calcutta with the letter from the King of Ava, which has been translated by Mr. EDWARDS, in compliance with the directions he states he received."

It will be seen by the above, that the Burmese Government complied instantly with the demand for the dismissal of the Governor of Rangoon, and promised redress for the injuries he had inflicted upon British subjects. But I beg the especial attention of the reader to the paragraph printed in capitals, which expresses the belief of the writer in the sincerity of the King, and to which I shall again have occasion to refer. The whole case, as between the Governments of Burmah and of India, may henceforth be said to turn upon this passage.

The letter from the Burmese Government to the Government of India, and that to Commodore LAMBERT, are written not only in a courteous but a deferential tone. I will merely give the concluding sentence of the letter to the Commodore, showing, as it does, that the Court of Ava were under the impression that he would himself be the bearer of the answer to the letter of the Indian Government: "We have to request," say the Burmese Ministers, "that Commodore LAMBERT will, with friendly feeling, apprise us of the date of his departure from Rangoon, with the reply to the letter of the President of the Council of India."* I ask the reader to bear this in mind in connexion with what is to follow.

"On the 4th of January, the newly-appointed Governor, or

* P. 36.

Special Commissioner from the Court of Ava, arrived at Rangoon, with a numerous suite."* On the 5th, Commodore LAMBERT "sent Mr. EDWARDS, the assistant-interpreter, to ascertain when it would be convenient for him to receive an officer with a letter, stating the nature of the claims which the Government of British India had made on that of Burmah, and to say that when all had been adjusted, he should do himself the honour of personally paying his respects to him: the reply to which was, that the Governor was ready at any time to receive communications from him; and the following day was fixed."† On this visit Mr. EDWARDS, who was clerk to Captain LATTER, the interpreter to the squadron, and himself familiar with the Burmese language, was admitted to a personal interview with the new Governor, who at once consented, at the instance of Mr. EDWARDS, to remove the embargo by which the inhabitants had been hitherto prevented from holding communication with the ships or boats of the squadron.‡ It is important that this fact should be borne in mind, as an answer to the vague statements, for which no official proofs are afforded, that the new Governor had, on his first arrival, by his proclamation and other acts, shown an unfriendly disposition towards the British residents.

On the following day, the 6th, "the Commodore directed Captain FISHBOURNE, commanding Her Majesty's steamer *Hermes*, Captain LATTER, and two officers of the *Hermes*, with Mr. EDWARDS, to proceed and deliver to the Governor the letter containing the demands he was charged to make. Captain LATTER was at the time on board the *Proserpine*, finishing the Burmese translation of the letter which was to be given to the Governor; and to give him due warning of their approach, on his own responsibility, as there was no time to spare, he sent Mr. EDWARDS on shore to him, to give notice of their coming, and charged him to say, that as he had already shown his friendly feelings by his amicable expressions of the day before, with reference to the time of receiving a communication from Commodore LAMBERT, there would be no necessity for making any display in receiving them, so that there could be no necessity for any delay." §

* P. 36.

† Ibid.

‡ P. 44.

§ Ibid.

Mr. EDWARDS landed and proceeded to the Governor's house; and now follows an incident which is of the utmost value as illustrative of the temper and disposition of the Governor towards his English visitors. The narrative is in Captain LATTER's own words:—"At the foot of the outer steps, one of the Governor's suite drew his dagger on him, and threateningly asked him how he dared thus to approach the Governor's house. Mr. EDWARDS replied that he had no intention of entering without the Governor's permission. On being called into the Governor's presence, he stated that his life had been threatened, and mentioned what had occurred. The Governor sent for the offender, and punished him in the presence of Mr. EDWARDS in the usual Burmese manner, namely, by having him taken by the hair of the head, swung round three times, his face dashed to the ground, himself dragged out by the hair and pitched down stairs."*

(I ask the reader to observe that, within six hours of the infliction of this severe punishment for an insult committed upon a clerk, Commodore Lambert will have declared Rangoon in a state of blockade for an insult alleged to have been offered by the Governor to the superior officers of the squadron.)

Mr. EDWARDS now delivered his message to the Governor, informing him of the deputation which was preparing to wait upon him:—the Governor said, "he wished to receive the communication through him and nobody else." Mr. EDWARDS replied "that that could not be for two reasons; first, that a communication of such importance could not be made through a person holding his subordinate position, being only a clerk under Captain LATTER's orders; and secondly, that even if it could be so made, it was too late now, as the officers entrusted with it, one of whom was in rank next to the Commodore himself, were now preparing to come."† Mr. EDWARDS took his leave, and returned to the vessel.

Before we accompany the deputation to the Governor's house, let it be understood that no previous arrangement had been come to for its reception. To all who are acquainted with the customs of the East, and the childlike importance which Oriental nations, and especially the Burmese, attach to the ceremonial of visits, it must be evident that the course about to be pursued was pretty

certain to end unsatisfactorily. The Governor had expressed his readiness to receive a *communication*, not a *deputation*, from Commodore LAMBERT, and he had entreated the clerk of the interpreter to bring it himself. Mr. EDWARDS could run in and out of his house freely, as bearer either of a message or letter, because, for a person of his inferior rank, no formal reception was necessary; but how "the Governor of all the lower Provinces, from Prome to the sea, including Rangoon," was to receive a body of officers of subordinate rank, without either offending them,* or for ever degrading himself in the eyes of his own people, was a question of etiquette not to be decided in a day. An Englishman, in such a dilemma, would order his servant to tell an unbidden caller he was "not at home." In the East, if the unwelcome visitor present himself in the middle of the day, the answer is, "My Master is asleep."

The deputation "landed at about noon, and proceeded to Mr. BIRRELL's house to procure horses to take them up, as the distance (about two miles) was too much to walk in the sun."† They were bearers of a letter from the Commodore, stating that "the object of his visit to Rangoon had been so satisfactorily met by the prompt course the Government of Ava had adopted in the permanent removal of the late Governor of Rangoon,"‡ that he felt assured of the amicable arrangement of the further matters to be discussed, and he concluded with a demand for the payment of 9,948 rupees, (a fraction under a thousand pounds), and suggesting that a Resident Agent at Rangoon should henceforth be appointed by the Governor-General of India, to avoid a recurrence of differences between the two countries. *There was nothing in the contents of the letter, which in the slightest degree called upon the writer to force the Governor to receive it by the hands of a deputation.*

It is right that the leader of the deputation should be allowed to relate in his own words what followed:—

* The reader will have seen a symptom of this in the allusion to the absence of a "crown," to the "common white dress," and the smoking of a cheroot, on the occasion of the interview of Captains LATTER and TARLETON with the former Governor—*ante*, p. 10.

† P. 45.

‡ P. 37.

"COMMANDER FISHBOURNE TO COMMODORE LAMBERT.

"*H.M's steam-sloop 'Hermes,' off Rangoon,*
January 6th, 1852.

"I have the honour to represent to you that, in pursuance of your orders of the 6th instant, to me, to wait ~~on~~ the Governor of Rangoon, with a letter from you, and also to inquire why it was that Mr. EDWARDS, while bearing a friendly message, had a sword placed at his breast, and threatened within the precincts of the Governor's house ?* Sic in orig

"I beg to state that I proceeded accordingly, accompanied by Captain LATTER, and Mr. EDWARDS, as interpreter, and Lieutenant LAWRENCE and Dr. MCLEOD, surgeon of Her Majesty's steam-sloop *Hermes*.

"When we arrived within a very short distance of the Governor's house, two sub-officials endeavoured to stop us. Captain LATTER assuring me that this was intended rather as a slight, I did not deem it proper to stop. Mr. EDWARDS, however, communicated with them, on which they said that we could not see the Governor, but must go and wait on the Deputy-Governor.

"On arriving at the gate of the Governor's compound, there appeared to be a reluctance on the part of two or three, that we should enter.

"On arriving at the foot of the stairs leading to the Governor's antechamber, there appeared at the top, MOUNG POGAN, a man who had accompanied each deputation to the *Fox* in the professed character of interpreter, and another, I presume, one of the Governor's retinue, the latter of whom stated that we could not see the Governor, as he was asleep, and asked if we could not wait till he awoke. This he was informed by Captain LATTER that we could not do, and that the Governor, if asleep, must be waked up, and informed that the Commander of one of the ships of war, bearing a letter from Commodore LAMBERT, waited to see him ; on this, he, together with MOUNG POGAN, went into the Governor's house, apparently to convey the message.

"They soon after returned, the one stating that the Governor was a great man, and was asleep and could not be awaked, but MOUNG POGAN called Mr. EDWARDS on one side and asked him to go up and speak with the Governor ; understanding this by his grimace, without waiting to be confirmed in the correctness of my conclusion, I said he could not go, whereupon Captain LATTER asked me for your letter (which I gave him), that he might point to it while explaining that it was one of a most peaceful kind, and insisted upon the necessity of our being received ; whereupon the attendant and MOUNG POGAN went again, as it were, to see the Governor, saying, that we had better go and stand under the shed, a place where the common people usually assembled.

* Remembering the summary punishment already inflicted upon the wretched offender in this case, a recurrence to it as a grievance looks very much like a desire to find a ground of quarrel.

"Meanwhile, expressing the great inconvenience of staying in the sun, I was going up stairs with a view to sit in the Governor's waiting-room, but Captain LATTER interposed, and said it was not according to etiquette ; I was informed also that my going under the shed alluded to, for protection from the sun, would be considered by them as degrading ; I refrained from going, or rather returned to my original position at the foot of the stairs, for I had gone under the shed.

"The attendant and MOUNG POGAN returned, the former again repeating that the Governor was asleep, and MOUNG POGAN again expressed a wish that Mr. EDWARDS should go up, and, on this being again refused, proposed that your letter should be sent to the Governor by them, which I considered it my duty to refuse ; Captain LATTER, at the same time, explaining that if it were proper to send the letter by them, it were unnecessary to have sent the captain of an English man-of-war, and the next in command to the Commodore, with it.

"About this time, an officer came up, whom I recognised as one who had been on a deputation from the Governor to the Commodore ; and, being anxious to have matters settled amicably, I requested Captain LATTER to explain to him how improper the treatment we had received had been ; that he must be well aware that every deputation from the Governor and Deputy Governor had been received by the Commodore at all times, and with courtesy ; and, if it had been that the Commodore had been asleep, his principal officer would have had him awakened, and made acquainted with the fact of a deputation being in waiting for an audience with him, that he might receive it ; and to impress upon him the propriety and necessity for me, bearing a friendly letter from the Commodore, being received immediately ; for if I was not, I must consider it a premeditated insult, and go away and report the circumstance.

"I was quite satisfied of the insincerity of the statement relating to the Governor being asleep, from the manner of the attendant, and from the fact of MOUNG POGAN asking Mr. EDWARDS to go up to the Governor, and indeed from his appearing at the Governor's when we arrived--for, when we were getting our horses, to ride up, this MOUNG POGAN appeared, and was asked by Captain LATTER if the Governor knew we were coming, and he said he did not know ; then Captain LATTER said, 'You had better go up, and say that we are coming ;' to which he answered, 'I am a subject of Burmah, and cannot take a message to my Lord the Governor, unless I had permission from him.'

"Finding, after some little time, that the officer alluded to above did not return, I conceived it to be my duty to return, and report the circumstance ; in doing so, I returned most leisurely, to give them time to send after me with an apology ; and not finding my boat at the landing-place, I waited her arrival (for the same purpose), rather than come off earlier in a merchant-ship's boat, which was offered me."

On their return to the frigate, Commander FISHBOURNE reported (as above) to Commodore LAMBERT, the treatment the deputation had received. The Commodore appears to have instantly decided upon the course he would pursue:—without affording time or opportunity to the Governor to explain or apologise for what had occurred, without referring the matter to the government of India, which he might have done in a few days, or to the government of Ava as he had done before, he resolved, that very day, to enter upon hostilities with the Burmese nation. “The Commodore forthwith directed a boat to be sent to summon some of the English residents from the shore. On their arrival, he warned them to be prepared to leave the town during the afternoon, and requested them to give notice to all other British subjects. He ordered all the boats of the squadron to assist in bringing them off, and a steamer to be off the wharf to cover their embarkation.”* They were allowed to leave, without molestation.

“The British subjects, men, women and children, to the amount of several hundred, took refuge during the afternoon on board the shipping in the river, and before the evening had set in, the vessels had commenced dropping down the river.”†

“It was dark before the Commodore issued orders to seize what was usually styled, the ‘Yellow Ship.’‡ This ship, which belonged to the King of Ava, was anchored a little above the squadron. The same day, the following notification of blockade appeared:—Let the reader recollect that all these occurrences took place on the afternoon and night of the 6th January, in consequence of the deputation of that day ‘*having been kept waiting for a full quarter of an hour in the sun.*’”§

“NOTIFICATION.

“*In virtue of authority from the Governor-General of British India I do hereby declare the rivers of Rangoon, the Bassein, and the Salween above Moulmein, to be in a state of blockade; and, with the view to the strict enforcement thereof, a competent force will be stationed in, or near, the entrance of the said rivers immediately.*

“Neutral vessels, lying in either of the blockaded rivers, will be permitted to retire within twenty days from the commencement of the blockade.

* P. 46. † Ibid. ‡ Ibid. § P. 72. Captain Latter's Narrative.

"Given under my hand, on board Her Britannic Majesty's frigate *Fox*, off the town of Rangoon, the 6th of January, 1852.

"GEORGE R. LAMBERT,

"*Commodore in Her Britannic Majesty's Navy.*"

"By command of the Commodore,

"J. L. SOUTHEY, *Secretary.*"

Let us now pause for a moment to recapitulate the facts which we have been narrating. It has been seen that Commodore LAMBERT, setting aside the instructions he had received, refused to communicate with the former Governor of Rangoon, on the plea of a long list of fresh complaints having been preferred against him ; and that the Governor-General of India, whilst refusing to espouse those grievances, had sanctioned the course which, the Commodore had taken upon himself to pursue. We have seen how Commodore LAMBERT entered into correspondence with the Court of Ava, although instructed not to do so, until he had been refused reparation by the Governor ; and how he remained off Rangoon, waiting the reply, which he peremptorily demanded in thirty-five days, notwithstanding that the Governor-General had intimated to him that, pending the return of an answer, he might proceed to the Persian Gulf ; and we have seen that these deviations from his instructions received the sanction of the Governor-General of India.

Need we wonder at what followed ? In the teeth of an express injunction, that, even should the reply to his demand for redress be unfavourable, no act of hostility was to be committed, "*nor until definite instructions regarding such hostilities shall be given by the Government of India.*"* Commodore LAMBERT commenced hostilities, by seizing the King's ship, and declaring the coast in a state of blockade, and this, notwithstanding that he had himself five days previously in his letter to Sir JOHN LITTLER, declared his belief that *the King of Ava was sincere in his promise of reparation "and would fully act up to what he had promised;"* and to crown all, let it be added that these hostile acts were committed before the answer from the King of Ava (which the latter believed Commodore LAMBERT, was himself carrying to Calcutta) could have been received by the Governor General of India, he being at that

time in Camp at Benares. It may be added, that when received, it elicited from the Indian Government, the following testimony to its pacific and conciliatory character.

"The letter addressed by the Ministers of the King of Ava to the Government of India, was friendly in its tone, and entirely satisfactory in its tenor. The Court of Ava promised at once to remove the Governor of Rangoon, and to inquire into, in order to redress, the injuries complained of.

"If there had been any good reason to doubt the sincerity of these assurances, their prompt fulfilment must have cleared away those doubts. The offending Governor was at once removed, and his successor took his place at Rangoon."*

And here I will only mention for future comment, the fact, the almost incredible fact, that there does not appear in the whole of the papers presented to Parliament, one word or syllable of remonstrance or remark on the part of the Governor-General, in vindication of his own authority—no not even after Commodore LAMBERT, as if in very derision and mockery, had in his notification declared the coast in a state of blockade, "*in virtue of authority from the Governor-General of British India.*"†

The conduct of the Governor of Rangoon is now a subject of minor importance;—the question for the statesman, the historian, and the moralist is—were we justified, whatever his behaviour was, with the known friendly disposition of the King, in commencing war against the Burmese nation? Let us, however, see if the papers before us will throw any light upon the origin of the treatment which the English deputation received at the house of the Governor.

And in the first place, as it is only fair that he should be heard in his own defence, I insert a letter of explanation addressed by the Governor of Rangoon to the Governor-General of India. The letter bears no date, but it was delivered to Commodore LAMBERT on the 8th January:—

"LETTER DELIVERED TO COMMODORE LAMBERT BY A DEPUTATION FROM THE GOVERNOR OF RANGOON.

"I, MAHAMENGHLA MENG KHANNYGYAN, appointed by the King of Ava (here follow the Royal titles) and by the great Ministers of State,

after due consultation, to rule all the Southern Districts (*i. e.*, from Prome to Martaban, including Rangoon), and to have my residence at Rangoon, inform the English rulers and war-chiefs :

“ That in conformity with the demand made by the English rulers, that the former Governor of Rangoon should be removed from his situation, on account of having oppressed and maltreated British merchants trading with the Port of Rangoon, and in order that a proper person might be appointed as Governor of Rangoon who would be capable of protecting the merchants and poor people, the former Governor was recalled to the royal presence. A letter was sent to the English rulers, informing them that a proper investigation into all complaints should be made, and I arrived at Rangoon.

“ Being actuated by the highest feelings of friendship to Commodore LAMBERT, whilst I was intending to send for him, the interpreter, EDWARDS, came and told me that he had come to acquaint me that Commodore LAMBERT wished to have an interview with me ; and, as I was fearful that any of the others might behave discourteously, and not according to the rules of etiquette, I decreed that the interpreter EDWARDS, might come with the letter or communication. But after some time, four inferior officers, an American clergyman, called KINCAID, and the interpreter EDWARDS, came in a state of intoxication, and, contrary to custom, entered the compound on horseback ; and whilst I was asleep, and the Deputy Governor was waking me, used violent and abusive language. They then went away, and conveyed an irritating message to the Commodore ; and that officer, listening to their improper and unbecoming representations, and with a manifest inclination to implicate the two nations in war, on the 6th of January, 1852, at night, with secrecy, took away the ship belonging to His Majesty the King of Ava.

“ I however, in consequence of there being a treaty of peace between the two nations, did not re-seize the vessel ; and though they were the bearers of a Royal message, on account of their unjustifiable conduct. The frigate stuck on the shore near Dallah. I did not, however, molest them, or destroy them, but acted worthily to these unworthy men ; and I now represent this conduct of Commodore LAMBERT to the English rulers, who came from one country to another, and behaved in a manner unbecoming an Ambassador.”

Passing by the charge of “ intoxication ” as unworthy of notice, we come to the real ground of offence in the fact of “ four *inferior* officers ” having, “ contrary to custom, entered the compound on horseback,” or in other words, having rode, without invitation, into the open court of the Governor’s palace. The reader, if he has perused Mr. Crawfurd’s interesting narrative of his mission to Ava, in 1826, or if he enjoy the pleasure of the acquaintance of

that best living authority upon the habits of the Burmese, will have no difficulty in understanding the cause of the unseemly wrangle which took place between the British deputation and the Governor's attendants. One of the gravest questions of Burmese etiquette was involved in the approach of a visitor, whether on an elephant or on horseback, to the Governor's residence. The English officers outraged, perhaps unconsciously, his most cherished sense of dignity and decorum, in riding into the Governor's compound. They had no right, being subordinate in rank, to a formal reception. Commodore LAMBERT was alone entitled to that honour, and the preliminary arrangements for their meeting would have, perhaps, called for the display of great tact and temper. In all probability, the settling of the ceremonial of an interview would have taken more time than the negotiation for the payment of the thousand pounds. But, surely, Englishmen, who have the most formal Court in Christendom, ought not to be the least tolerant of Asiatic ceremonies. Commander FISHBOURNE seems to have thought it quite sufficient that Captain LATTER dispatched MOUNG POGAN a little in advance of the deputation "to say that we are coming." What should we think of an American deputation who required us to dispense with our Lord Chamberlains, Goldsticks, and Beef-eaters, and receive them after the simple fashion of the White House at Washington? Might we not probably doubt if they were sober?

In a word, the Governor was "asleep," *anglice*, "not at home," to avoid the embarrassment and danger of an interview. But he did not refuse to receive the Commodore's letter; he requested Mr. EDWARDS to bring it, and moreover, according to Commander FISHBOURNE'S statement, MOUNG POGAN and the attendants in the Governor's compound begged to be allowed to convey the letter to their master. But I find that the Governor-General of India, in a long and elaborate Minute of February 12th, in which the incidents of the rupture are recapitulated, admits the breach of etiquette on the part of our officers:—

"Assuming," says the Governor-General, "that there was in the deputing of these officers a neglect of strict form, although (be it observed) no such forms had been attended to on his own part, by the Governor of Rangoon, whose letter had been conveyed to the Commodore by officers

of the humblest rank, and admittance had been freely granted to them ; *admitting, I say, that ceremonial had not been duly observed*, the omission affords no justification whatever, for the insult and contumely which were publicly heaped upon these officers, the known agents, for the time, of the Government they served."

And again,

"The persons of the officers were known, their mission was known, their approach had been announced ; *and although the omission of ceremonial form to which I have alluded, might have given to the Governor a plausible pretext for declining to receive the officers in person*, his own conduct in the transmission of his communications had greatly weakened that pretext ; while nothing could justify the gross, deliberate, and studied affront which was put upon the British Government, in the person of its officers, conveying a communication on its behalf to the Representative of the King of Ava."*

The same loose and illogical reasoning which I have before had to notice, characterises these passages from the Governor-General's "Minute." What could possibly be more inconclusive than the argument, if I may call it so, in the above extract, where, after admitting the breach of etiquette on the part of our officers, it is contended that the Governor of Rangoon had no right to complain, because he had himself sent letters to Commodore LAMBERT, "by officers of the humblest rank, and admittance had been freely granted to them." This might have been a valid plea if the complaint of the Governor had been that his visitors were of too low a rank ; but it was just the reverse—the very thing desired by him was, that the Commodore would follow his example, and forward his letter by a person in the humble position of Mr. EDWARDS, or one of his own attendants. The embarrassment of the Governor, arose from his being called on to give audience to visitors who were not his equals in rank, and who yet could not be treated as inferiors, or messengers. To Englishmen, all this appears excessively childish, and it is because it does so, that an English Governor need not trouble himself about such matters ;—not so with the Burmese :—"With them," says the Governor-General in the same "Minute," "forms are essential substance, and the method of communication and the style of address, are not words but acts."† And it is worthy of notice, that at a subsequent stage of this affair, in the "Minute" for the guidance

of General Godwin, when he was dispatched in command of the expedition to Rangoon, the Governor-General, after ordering him in a certain contingency to arrange a meeting with the chief officer of the King of Ava, adds:—"the forms of such meetings should be arranged previously, and a record made of them; it being understood that they are to be the recognized forms of reception of the British agent for the future."* It is a most perplexing fact throughout these papers, that although it is apparent that the Governor-General perceives the rashness of the acts of Commodore LAMBERT, and even provides against their repetition in future, and whilst it is impossible to doubt that he must feel the humiliation of having his authority entirely set aside—yet not one word falls from him, to show that he was more than a passive looker-on at the contemptuous disregard of his own instructions!

But to return to the scene of operations before Rangoon, where, as will be recollected, Commodore LAMBERT had declared the coast of Burmah in a state of blockade, and seized the King's ship, because his officers had been kept a "full quarter of an hour" waiting in the sun.

Much has been said about the arrogance of the Burmese, their contempt for other nations, and their desire to enter upon hostilities with the English. The papers before us prove, on the contrary, that they felt the utmost dread of our power. A covey of partridges with a hawk in view, ready to make its fell swoop, or a flock of sheep with a wolf's eyes glaring into the fold, could not shrink more timidly from their terrible and irresistible foe than did the Burmese officials at the prospect of a hostile collision with England. Captain LATTER says, that so great was their apprehension when the Commodore seized the King's ship, that "they even seemed alarmed for the safety of their own heads."†

"On Wednesday, the 7th January, at day-break, Her Majesty's Steamer, *Hermes*, took the King's ship in tow, and the whole squadron proceeded down the river a short distance, the frigate remaining a little below Dallah."‡ I must here introduce the reader to an interesting personage, in the Governor of Dallah.

"But whilst the conduct of the Rangoon authorities was so unsatisfactory," says Captain LATTER, in his narrative of the earlier events

* P. 83.

† Captain Latter's Narrative, p. 47.

‡ P. 47.

before the arrival of the new Governor, "a marked exception existed in the person of the Governor of Dallah, a town on the other side of the river. Commodore LAMBERT, from information he had received of the favourable disposition of the Governor, had paid him an unofficial visit, in order, personally, to impress upon an officer of his rank and respectable character, his (the Commodore's) peaceful views and wishes. The Commodore was received by the Dallah Governor with the greatest courtesy and respect; and throughout the whole of the subsequent annoying transactions, the conduct of the Dallah Governor was all that could be expected from a good man and a gentleman." *

Let us now continue the narrative of the events of the 7th of January, as they are given to us by Captain LATTER.

" During the morning of this day, the Dallah Governor came off, being sent by the Governor of Rangoon to see what he could do in the business. The Commodore informed him, that in consideration of his (the Commodore's) personal regard for him, and as a mark of the appreciation in which he held his admirable conduct during the whole time the expedition had been lying off Rangoon, he would in a measure, deviate from his first intentions, and that he would again open communications with the present Governor, if that officer would come himself on board his frigate, and express his regret for the insult that he had offered to the British Flag, in the persons of the deputation sent to him the previous day. The Dallah Governor took his leave, and after some hours, the Under-Governor of Rangoon, with the interpreter, MOUNG POGAN, made his appearance. He was the bearer of a letter† from the Governor, declaring that he really was asleep when the deputation reached him; that he did not wish to see a deputation of inferior officers; that he would see the Commodore, and wished the Commodore to go to him. He did not in the slightest degree express any regret or sorrow for what had occurred. The Commodore informed the Under-Governor, that he would not swerve from the ultimatum he had already given through the Governor of Dallah, and he gave him till noon of the next day to make up his mind. A good deal more conversation took place, owing to the Under-Governor endeavouring to shake the Commodore's determination. Both he and the others contradicted themselves every few minutes; now asserting that the Governor was asleep at the time the deputation came to his door; next asking why Mr. EDWARDS did not come to him when he sent to call him. At one time the Under-Governor denied being at the interview in which Mr. EDWARDS complained of having been threatened with a dagger; then, when pressed, acknowledging that he was at the interview, but that he had neither seen or heard anything about it. It would be as tedious, as it would be unnecessary, to enter into a detail

* P. 43. † This letter is not given, as it ought to have been.

of all the lies and subterfuges they were guilty of, till at last they left the frigate, when they complained of the seizure of the King's ship. The Commodore informed them that he had seized it because it was the King's ship ; that had it been a common Burmese merchant-ship, he would not have taken possession of it ; and that he seized it, as much for the purpose of showing them that the acts of subordinates, if not promptly disowned and punished by those whom they represented, would be inevitably visited on the principals ; *that he had no doubt, that when the King of Ava became acquainted with the insolent conduct of his subordinates to those who came to make a friendly communication, refusing to receive such communication, and thus jeopardizing his Throne, he would visit them with condign punishment* ; that if the Governor of Rangoon wished to avoid such a fate, he had only to accede to his, the Commodore's demands in everything ; that then, when all his demands had been fully complied with, he would give back the King's ship, and salute the flag of Burmah with a royal salute. He furthermore impressively added, that until further instructions came from the Governor-General of India, of which they would be duly informed, nothing should induce him to act aggressively, unless they commenced hostilities themselves ; and he concluded by saying, that should any detriment occur to the King of Ava, from what had occurred, it would wholly rest upon the head of the Governor of Rangoon."

It will be seen that the difficulty between the Commodore and the Governor turns still upon a point of etiquette. The Governor complains of the deputation of "inferior officers"—wishes to see the Commodore himself, and asks him to come on shore to him ; the latter insists upon the former going on board his ship to make an apology ; instead of which, the Governor of Rangoon sends his deputy Governor, for he himself would probably prefer death to the dishonour which he would suffer in the eyes of his people, if he were to submit to the humiliating terms proposed to him. And I will here mention the fact, that when these conditions were made known to the Governor-General of India, he, *without comment*, expunged from the ultimatum the harsh condition requiring a visit to the Commodore's ship, and merely demanded a written apology.* But this altercation between two subordinate officers is a matter of secondary importance ; the real question being, was Lord DALHOUSIE, the Governor-General of India, who adopted as his own all Commodore LAMBERT's acts, justified in commencing hostilities against the Burmese nation, after the proofs afforded

* P. 53.

of the fair and conciliatory disposition of the King? The passage in the above extract which I have marked with italics, appears to me to decide the question; for there we find the Commodore himself declaring, *after* he had seized the royal ship, his belief that the King was still actuated by such just and friendly feelings, that he would visit with condign punishment those who had insulted the deputation. *What possible pretence could there be then for committing an act of hostility against him?*

During the next day, Thursday, the 8th, the Dallah Governor came on board the frigate, and stated that "he was very anxious that the Commodore should give up the King's ship, as that any punishment the King might inflict upon his servants for its loss might be partially visited upon him, as the ship was taken away in the waters between his government and that of the Governor of Rangoon."* This request was refused, but as a mark of esteem for the Governor of Dallah, the Commodore prolonged the time for the Rangoon Governor to accede to his terms from noon till sunset. The Commodore now received a message from the Governor of Rangoon, "to the effect, that if he attempted to take the King of Ava's ship out of the river, he would fire on him."†

I have already stated, that on this day, a letter of explanation from the Governor of Rangoon ‡ to the Governor-General of India was delivered by a deputation to Commodore LAMBERT, to be forwarded to Calcutta.

Now follows the catastrophe, which must be described in Commodore LAMBERT's own words:— 18138

"Shortly after daylight this morning (January 10th) I weighed, and caused the merchant-vessels to follow me. They were assisted and guarded by the East India Company's steam-vessel *Phlegethon*, and the boats of this ship. *On my arrival off the great stockade, I anchored, and found it occupied by a considerable force.* An immense number of large war-boats, with guns mounted in them, were also lying close to the shore, and at the entrance of a small creek, under the walls of the stockade, and were fully manned. Their behaviour was exceedingly threatening, but I refrained from interfering with them, as I had promised yesterday that I would not fire on the Burmese first.

"Her Majesty's steam-sloop *Hermes*, with the King of Ava's ship in

* P. 48.

† P. 41.

‡ Ante p. 23.

tow, passed us at half-past nine, when the stockade opened a sharp cannonade on Her Majesty's ship *Fox*, which was instantly returned with shot and shell, and the Burmese battery was in a short time silenced. On the smoke clearing away, not a person was to be seen on the shore or in the boats.*

*"Our fire, I have no doubt, must have done great execution, for I have reason to believe that at least 3000 men were opposed against us. One or two of the enemy's shot struck the *Fox* but did very trifling damage. Their shot in general fell short, a few only passing over us, and their small arms did no execution."*

"I then sent the *Phlegethon* and the boats of the *Fox* close in shore, to destroy the war-boats, which was easily accomplished, and their guns spiked, or thrown into the river. Their crews, being unable to stand our fire, had fled on the first broadside.

"The *Hermes*, in the meantime, engaged a stockade on the opposite side of the river, which had opened a fire on her; her heavy guns and a few rockets soon silenced this battery, and compelled the Burmese to retire."†

A word or two in the way of recapitulation. On the 6th, at night, Commodore LAMBERT seized the King's ship which he held in his possession at anchor opposite the town for three days, during which time the Burmese made no attempt to retake it; but, on the contrary, conciliatory visits were paid to the Commodore, by the authorities of the highest rank in the neighbourhood, (short of the Governor of the district); and letters of explanation to the Governor-General and to Commodore LAMBERT, as well as friendly messages, were forwarded from the Governor of Rangoon himself. There is no reason to suppose that any act of hostility would have been committed, had the King's ship been merely kept at anchor, in the power of the British. But to have allowed a Burmese ship of war to be towed out of the river by foreigners, passing under the great stockade, or battery, without molestation, would have involved the disgrace and destruction of those who were responsible

* On the news of this event reaching England, it gave rise to a discussion in the House of Lords, when the following remark was made by Lord DERBY, then Prime Minister (April 5th, 1852):—

"On receiving information of the insults offered to Commander FISHBOURNE, Commodore LAMBERT said it was impossible that he could continue communications with such a government, and actually withdrew;—but unfortunately, as I think, by way of retaliation for the insults offered to his officer, taking on himself without previous instructions, to seize a vessel of the King of Ava, which he carried with him."

† P. 41.

to the King of Ava, for the protection of his property. Notice was therefore given, that if the Commodore attempted to remove the King's ship out of the river, he would be fired upon: upon which, as if determined to force a collision, taking his own vessel the *Fox* opposite the great stockade, he there dropped anchor; the *Hermes* passed with the King's ship in tow, and the stockade opened a fire, apparently with no other object but to save the honour of the Burmese flag, for upon the discharge of a broadside from the *Fox* the battery was silenced, and its garrison fled. "Great execution," we are told, was done by our fire: I hope not; for in the eyes of God, and of just men, every life sacrificed must, I fear, be regarded as a case of murder.

Let us suppose that, instead of Rangoon, the scene of these operations had been at Charleston. There is at present pending between this country and the United States a question of difficulty and delicacy, arising out of the conduct of the authorities of South Carolina at Charleston, who have seized a British sailor, on no better plea than that his skin is not so white as that of his captors, and subjected him to confinement in a common gaol, until the departure of his vessel. We shall suppose that the commander of our squadron on that station, Commodore LAMBERT by name, has been dispatched to demand redress. On his arrival at Charleston, he finds the Governor such an impracticable pro-slavery character, that he addresses a letter of complaint to the Federal Government at Washington, in reply to which he receives a conciliatory answer, assuring him that everything possible shall be done to remedy the grievance. On announcing the receipt of this communication to his own government, the Commodore adds, "I am of opinion that the *President* is sincere, and that his government will fully act up to what he has promised."* Before this announcement has reached London, where it would be made the subject of complimentary remark by the Minister of the Crown,†

* *Ante*, p. 13.

† When the news of the removal of the Governor of Rangoon reached England, and before the subsequent events were known, it elicited from the representative of the then Whig Administration in the *House of Lords* the following remarks:—"The events proved," said the Marquis of LANSDOWNE, "the propriety and justice of the Commodore's mode of proceeding; for that letter addressed to the King of Ava was taken into consideration by him

we will suppose that an insult has been offered by the Governor of South Carolina to some officers of the British squadron—the bearers of a letter from the Commodore. A ship of war belonging to the Government of the United States, lying at Charleston, is instantly seized, and, notwithstanding notice was given, that if an attempt should be made to carry her off the Commodore's ships would be fired upon from the shore, she is towed out to sea, the American battery opening fire as they pass, and receiving in return a broadside which does "great execution." What would have been the response to this news when it reached England? Can any one doubt that one unanimous cry would have been raised for the disgrace and punishment of Commodore LAMBERT? And why is a different standard of justice applied in the case of Burmah? Ask your own conscience, reader, if you be an Englishman, whether any better answer can be given than that America is powerful, and Burmah weak.

It might be expected that having carried off a ship of war and killed a number of the Burmese forces, sufficient "satisfaction" had been obtained for a claim of £920. But the coast of Burmah was still declared in a state of blockade.

On the day after the removal of the King's ship, the following petition from the resident merchants, prepared at the instance of the Governor, was sent by a flag of truce to Commodore LAMBERT, but no answer was returned: — *

PETITION FROM THE ARMENIAN, MOGUL, SOORATTEE, NURRAPOOR, PARSEE, CHULIAH, AND MUSSULMAN INHABITANTS AND MERCHANTS OF RANGOON TO COMMODORE LAMBERT.

"January 11th, 1852.

"THE two great countries being in peace, your petitioners have continued with their wives and children for many years to reside and trade in this country.

and his Majesty felt that reparation was due to us, and immediately removed the Governor from his post. *I have no reason to presume that the redress asked for will not fairly be given. The course taken by the King has been extremely just;* and he has sent two persons to the spot, in order to inquire into the various acts of injustice, and settle the amount of compensation to be paid in respect of them." Long before these observations were made (February 16th, 1852), Commodore LAMBERT had carried off this "just" king's ship, and done "great execution" amongst his subjects. *

“The late Governor (of Rangoon) having been dismissed for unjustifiable and improper conduct, was taken to the Golden Feet (capital of Ava), in obedience to the royal order, for punishment.

“Subsequently, the Aye Bain (present Governor) having arrived, was prepared to meet and discuss, with the Commodore whatever remained to be adjusted. *Not having been enabled to do so, he has sent for and desired your petitioners to make the following representation respecting the communication made to the Governor of Dallah, viz.*

“That he is willing to abide by the provisions of the Yandaboo Treaty.

“To agree to a Resident being appointed.

“To pay the sum of upwards of 9000 rupees.

“And to have a Residency House erected.

“In accordance with the Royal order, the above subjects were to have been discussed by the two great men in an amicable and friendly manner, but Commodore Lambert has not given him an opportunity of doing so.

“Your petitioners and the merchants, both great and small, at Rangoon and at the capital of Ava amount to upwards of 600 souls, ‘who are in a condition of being stranded in shallow water.’

“Your petitioners, therefore, most humbly entreat you, in the name of Almighty God, to have pity upon them, and to save and protect them from ruin and destruction.”

Abandoning in despair any further attempts to propitiate Commodore LAMBERT, the Burmese now addressed themselves to *Colonel Bogle, Commissioner in the Tenasserim Provinces*, a territory which was wrested from Burmah in the war of 1826, and which lies upon the frontier of that empire. To him the Governor of Rangoon forwarded, on the 16th January, a letter for the Governor-General of India, the contents of which were almost a repetition of the letter delivered by a deputation from the same functionary to Commodore LAMBERT on the 8th. The Governor of Martaban, a Burmese port situated opposite to Moulmein, the principal sea-port of Tenasserim, forwarded also at the same time the following letter to Colonel BOGLE:—

“THE GOVERNOR OF MARTABAN TO THE BRITISH COMMISSIONER AT MOULMEIN.

“January 21st, 1852.

“TIKLA MYO TSA MOTAMA MYO MINGYEE (Martaban Governor) Mingyee Maka thinka yah, informs the Moulmein Mingyee and Aya-bing Ming (Commissioner and Principal Assistant Commissioner), that,

forasmuch as peace and tranquillity is the sole object in view between the two great kingdoms, a friendly intercourse being established, traffic has hitherto been carried on between the merchants of the two countries without interruption. In consequence, however, of complaints having been preferred against the former Rangoon Mywoon, that he oppressed foreign merchants, certain English officers were despatched on a mission to represent them. These officers arrived, and thirty-five days being fixed as the period within which their despatches were to be transmitted, and the Royal answer received, *while yet the mandate issued from the Shuay Shoot Tah (the Golden Royal Court) was on its way to India, there came the intelligence that the English officers had attacked and carried off the King's ship out of the port of Rangoon.* Now the Governor-General of India simply appointed the Mission to treat; they had no instructions to fight; and, should this capture of His Majesty's ship prove the occasion of a fierce war, the trade between the two countries will be sacrificed for an unprofitable quarrel. It is not right that there should be a war. The character of those in authority depends upon peace, and a free and uninterrupted trade; hence, therefore, the dispatch of these letters; and it is requested that the English Government will return a full and explicit answer to them.

The common sense and logic of the above, as well as its philanthropic sentiments, present, I am sorry to say, a most favourable contrast to the Christian side of this correspondence. This letter ought, in fact, to have been written by the Governor-General of India to Commodore LAMBERT, calling on him to justify his seizure of the royal ship, whilst the King of Ava's letter was still on its way to India, and reminding him that he was sent on a mission to treat, but that he had strict injunctions not to fight.

In this and the other Burmese letters written after the rupture, the seizure of the King's ship is alluded to with an emphasis which shows that, although certainly unacquainted with the writings of VATTEL or PUFFENDORF, the writers are well aware that it constituted an act of war; and since no declaration of war had been published, and seeing that they still regarded Commodore LAMBERT as merely the bearer of a communication to their Government from a superior power, to whom an answer conceding all that was demanded had been returned by the King of Ava, they were perplexed at the conduct of the English Commander, and sometimes almost doubted whether he was really the person he represented himself to be. "Unlike a man of the world, son of a great country," says the Governor of Rangoon, "and actuated

only by a wish to create a quarrel, he *covertly unmoored and carried off the great ship.*"* And in another letter he says, "On the 6th January, at midnight, Commodore LAMBERT took away the ship belonging to His Majesty the King of Ava. On the following day, I sent the Deputy-Governor of Rangoon to represent to Commodore LAMBERT, that the act of taking His Majesty's ship *by stealth, and unjustly, was in no wise in accordance with the acts proper to two great nations.*"† "In a manner unbecoming the sons of a great nation," says the Governor of Bassein, "*you secretly stole and took away the ship belonging to the King of Ava.*"‡ And again, to quote from another letter from the Rangoon Governor: "Commodore LAMBERT expresses surprise at having been fired at by the officers in charge of the stockades of Dumont and Thilawa, but it is a matter of greater surprise that the Royal Ship of His Majesty should have been seized at midnight, contrary to the custom of great nations and the rules of justice."§ In fact, throughout all the subsequent correspondence, there is on the part of the Burmese, a constant recurrence to this outrageous act of violence. They attached comparatively little importance to the blockade of their ports;|| but neither the French, nor the Americans could apparently have felt more keenly than they did, the insult offered in the seizure, "at midnight" of the King's ship.

Let the reader of the few remaining pages of this narrative, always bear in mind that the two contending parties, from this moment, stand in the following relative positions towards each other. The English complain that the Burmese have extorted 9948 rupees, (a fraction under a thousand pounds) from British subjects, and that a deputation of their officers has been kept waiting "a full quarter of an hour" in the sun; and on the other side, it must be remembered that the English have carried off the only ship of war belonging to the Burmese Government, (worth probably ten times as much as 9948 rupees,) doing in the act "great execution" amongst their troops, without suffering any loss or injury themselves, and that they have established a blockade of all the Burmese ports.

I have said that a letter was sent by the Governor of Rangoon,

* P. 58.

† P. 63.

‡ P. 71.

§ P. 56.

|| P. 68.

through Commodore LAMBERT, to the Governor-General of India, on the 8th of January, two days after the seizure of the King's ship. The reader is requested to reperuse that letter.* It will be seen, that after an explanatory allusion to his own conduct towards the deputation, which he charges with having been intoxicated, the Governor makes a complaint that the Commodore had a "manifest inclination to implicate the two nations in war;" and he concludes with these words, "I now represent this conduct of Commodore LAMBERT to the English rulers, who came from one country to another, and behaved in a manner unbecoming an ambassador."

The reply of the Government of India, is dated January 26th. The letter begins with an expression of extreme surprise that the Governor of Rangoon had listened to the falsehoods of his servants respecting the mebriety of the officers composing the deputation, and then proceeds to complain of the disrespectful conduct shown to them "at the gates of the Governor's palace."†

"If," continues the despatch, "those officers were inferior in rank, as the Governor now declares, and if the customs of his country were thereby violated, or any apparent disrespect were shown to the Governor, or his Sovereign, the departure from custom ought to have been properly represented by the Governor, when the error would, doubtless, have been corrected."

After declaring that the Government of India would not allow its officers to suffer insult, without requiring reparation, the letter concludes with the following specific demands.—

"1. The Governor will express, in writing, to the Government of India, his deep regret that Commander FISHBOURNE and the officers deputed by Commodore LAMBERT to the Governor, should have been treated with disrespect, and exposed to public insult at his own residence, on the 6th of January.

"2. He will consent to pay immediately the compensation already demanded of 9,948 rupees, for injuries done to Captain SHEPPARD and Captain LEWIS.

"3. He will consent to receive with the honour due to the Representative of the British Government, the accredited Agent whom, in accordance with the 7th clause of the Treaty of Yandaboo, the Government is prepared to appoint.

"If these concessions shall be made, the British Government will agree as follows:—

"1. The Government of India will depute an officer of rank to proceed to Rangoon, in order to adjust the final settlement of the questions

* Ante, pp. 30, 31.

† P. 52.

above mentioned, and to arrange the details for the reception of the Agent. The preliminaries having been settled by the subordinates of the chiefs, a meeting shall take place, and all differences shall be composed.

“ 2. On this settlement being completed, the ship belonging to the King of Ava, which has been seized by the squadron, shall be released.

“ 3. The blockade shall be removed, and entire concord shall be restored.

“ If these demands shall be refused, the British Government will thereafter exact for itself the reparation which is due for the wrong it has suffered.”

The reader will observe that not the slightest allusion is made to the complaint of the Governor of Rangoon respecting the seizure of the King's ship. On the contrary, it is assumed that the British are still the aggrieved parties, to whom reparation is due, notwithstanding the capture of that vessel, and the slaughter which accompanied its removal. I ask the reader again to suppose that a similar despatch, under the like circumstances, had been received from America, would the complaint in such a case have passed unnoticed ?

I give the answer of the Rangoon Governor in full. The letters of the Burmese authorities, translated into English, be it remembered, by a hostile pen, are remarkable for their terseness and clear common sense, and offer a striking contrast to the lengthy, rambling, and inconclusive reasoning which characterises the British part of the correspondence :—

“ THE GOVERNOR OF RANGOON TO MR. HALLIDAY.

“ *Rangoon, February 2nd, 1852.*

“ MAHAMENGIA MENGKHOOMGYAN (with titles), Governor of Rangoon, informs Mr. FREDERICK JAMES HALLIDAY, Secretary to the Government of India (with titles).

“ With reference to the demand of an expression of deep regret for the circumstance of the deputation of officers sent by Commodore LAMBERT on the 6th of January last, being said to have been publicly treated with disrespect ;

“ With reference to the being willing immediately to make good the sum of 9,948 rupees, said to have been extorted from Captains LEWIS and SHEPPARD, by the former Governor of Rangoon ;

“ With reference to being willing to receive a Resident with all honour due to his rank and station, in conformity to the VIIth Article of the Treaty of Yandaboo ;

“ That with reference to the above three points, if they are acceded

to by the Governor of Rangoon, first, the ship belonging to the King of Ava, which has been seized, will be given back ; secondly, the blockade now existing will be raised, and perfect concord restored.

“ With reference to the above points contained in your letter, I, the Governor of Rangoon, taking them into my careful consideration, give the following reply :—

“ On the 6th of January, 1852, Commodore LAMBERT, at midnight, took away the ship belonging to His Majesty the King of Ava. On the following day, I sent the Deputy-Governor of Rangoon to represent to Commodore LAMBERT, that the act of taking his Majesty's ship by stealth, and unjustly, was in no wise in accordance with the acts proper to two great nations.

“ Commodore LAMBERT stated in reply, that his reason for seizing the King's ship was, because a deputation of subordinate officers sent by him had not been received.

“ Commodore LAMBERT then wrote a letter to the Prime Ministers of Ava, as also transmitting one to myself, which were delivered to one of my subordinate officers. These letters were to the effect, that he, Commodore LAMBERT, had seized the King's ship, because the pecuniary claims under discussion had not been satisfied.

“ What Commodore LAMBERT expressed, as above stated, both verbally and in writing, was not in conformity with the custom of great nations. This the Government of India are aware of ; moreover, being aware of it, they have written a friendly letter, evincing their wish that the long-existing good understanding between the two nations should be renewed, and commerce and communication restored as they were before.

“ Therefore, as soon as the officer which the Government of India is prepared to appoint in conformity with existing treaties, shall arrive, a satisfactory and amicable arrangement can be made of the payment of the 9,948 rupees extorted from Captains LEWIS and SHEPPARD ; also with reference to the re-delivery of the King of Ava's Ship, seized by Commodore LAMBERT.

“ With reference to the question of the disrespect said to have been shown to the deputation sent with a letter by Commodore LAMBERT, it should be borne in mind, that the English officers have been stating their own version of the case, and consequently, whilst shielding themselves, they have thrown all the blame on the other side.”

Considering the sense of grievance felt by the writer, and which upon every principle of international law he was justified in feeling, remembering that not one syllable had been vouchsafed in explanation of the seizure of the King's ship, the above must be regarded as a conciliatory, nay, a most submissive communication.
What would America have said under the same circumstances ?

No sooner did it reach the Governor-General of India than he, (with the Burmese ship of war still in his power) resolved to "exact reparation by force of arms;" orders were given for fitting out an armed expedition, and he now proclaimed as his ultimatum that, in addition to a compliance with the preceding demands, the Burmese should be compelled as the price of peace, "in consideration of the expenses of the expedition, and of compensation for property,"* to pay ten lacs of rupees, or one hundred thousand pounds.

The "Minute," or rather the "Extract" from Lord DALHOUSIE's Minute, professing to give reasons in justification of these hostile proceedings, extends over nearly five pages of the Parliamentary papers. In justice to his own reputation, its author ought to call for the unabridged publication of this "Minute." In the emasculation which it underwent at the Board of Control, it must surely have lost the essential qualities of the original. It has none of the dignity or force which properly belong to a State-paper. It dwells with a minuteness quite feminine upon details respecting points of ceremonial, and breaches of etiquette; but in arguing the main questions at issue, the "Minute," in its present form, must be pronounced an unstatesmanlike, immoral, and illogical production.

These are strong words, but their truth can unfortunately be proved by evidence as strong.

The date of the Minute, is February 12th. Now let it be borne in mind, that up to this time there had been no ground for suspecting that the King of Ava had authorised the perpetration of any act of rudeness or injustice on the part of his servants at Rangoon, towards the British officers, or that he had abandoned his intention, in the sincerity of which Lord LANSDOWNE, and the Governor-General of India, and Commodore LAMBERT themselves, had expressed their belief, of satisfying the just demands of the Indian Government. Lord DALHOUSIE knew that on the 7th January, the day after the rupture at Rangoon, Commodore LAMBERT had written to the Burmese Ministers at Ava, informing them of what had occurred, and concluding his letter with these words: "Any explanation the Court of Ava may wish to make on the subject, I shall be ready to forward to the Governor-General of India."

A copy of this letter was in Lord DALHOUSIE's hands. He knew that an interval of thirty-five days was required for the receipt of an answer to a despatch sent to Ava, from Rangoon, and there was the additional time necessary for sending a steamer from Rangoon to Calcutta, which, with delays, could not fairly be calculated at less than another week, making together forty-two days. Now from January 7th, the date of Commodore LAMBERT's letter, to February 12th, the date of the "Minute," is just thirty-six days; so that this hostile expedition against the Burmese nation was resolved upon before sufficient time had been allowed to the King to offer the explanation which he had been invited to give. A letter from the King was, as we shall by and by see, on its way, and actually reached the Governor-General's hands within a week of the date of his "Minute."

But the unstatesmanlike fault (to use the mildest term) of the "Minute," lies in this—that whereas the specific charges are directed against the Governor of Rangoon and him only, an assumption pervades the whole argument, that the Burmese *Government* is the offending party:—hence the vague and confused phraseology which sometimes speaks of the "King," in some places of "Burmah," and in others, of the "Governor of Rangoon." But the sole object of the paper being, to justify an armed expedition against a country with which we had a treaty of peace and commerce, it must be evident that the acts and conduct of the Imperial Government, and not of one of its local officers, could alone justify a resort to hostilities; provided always, that the Government did not assume the responsibility of the acts of its servants. What would Lord DALHOUSIE have said, if the King of Ava had insisted upon treating with the Governor of Bombay, instead of himself?

The "Minute" professes to give a very detailed recapitulation of all that had occurred at Rangoon. Entire pages are devoted to disquisitions upon controverted points of punctilio. The offence offered to the majesty and power of England, in keeping the deputation waiting in the sun "a full quarter of an hour," is discussed in all its bearings; *but there is not one syllable of allusion to the fact that Commodore Lambert had, in the teeth of instructions to the contrary, carried off a Burmese vessel of war, and done "great execu-*

tion," among those who attempted to oppose him. Now, as this recapitulation of facts is intended to justify the despatch of a hostile expedition, to demand redress for certain injuries and insults, what must be said of the suppression of the one all-important fact, that we had already retaliated by force of arms, by seizing and carrying off ten times the amount of our pecuniary claim, and inflicting a hundred fold greater insult than that which had been offered to us,—thus in fact, changing the relative position of the two parties, and placing the Burmese in the situation of appellants for reparation and justice? What shall we say when after this *suppressio veri*, the Governor-General draws the following complacent deduction in favour of his “moderation and justice.” *

“The recital I have given in the preceding paragraphs of the course of recent events, [omitting the chief event] will show that the original demand of the Government of India for redress was just and necessary; and that it was sought in a manner respectful to an independent nation. It will show, that a gross insult having been put upon this Government in the persons of its officers, *the Government has not been eager to take offence, or perverse in refusing amends. It has shown itself sincerely desirous to open a way to reconciliation; it has practised the utmost moderation and forbearance.*” †

* The following description of the “execution” at the Stockades, when the King’s ship was carried off, is extracted from *The Second Burmese War*; a volume by Lieutenant LAURIE, written at Rangoon. I give it as an illustration of the Governor-General’s “moderation and forbearance.”

“At length, the *Hermes* came in sight, rounding the point with the Burmese prize-vessel in tow. As she passed the Stockade, guns in rapid succession were opened on the vessels of war; at the same time, volleys of musketry were discharged upon them. The *Fox* immediately returned the enemy’s fire by a terrific broadside; she likewise thundered forth against the war-boats which had ventured into the river. The *Hermes* then came up, and poured forth her shot and shell into the line of Stockade. The *Phlegethon* steamer, likewise, did vast destruction to the works. For nearly two hours were our vessels employed in spreading ruin and dismay around. During the conflict a large gun-boat having on board a gun of considerable calibre, and upwards of sixty armed men, was sunk by a broadside, when nearly all on board perished. Altogether, about three hundred of the enemy were killed, and about the same number wounded, in this first encounter with the Burmese. As the vessels proceeded down to the next Stockade, they were again fired on, but only by musketry. It was remarked, at the conclusion of these operations, that the enemy probably had no intention of serious resistance, but felt themselves obliged to make some show of defence, when they saw the King’s property taken off, as the heads of the leading men were at stake.”—pp. 30—31.

The reader will hardly think that more need be said to justify my charge of immorality: and now for a specimen of the illogical character of the "Minute."

In alluding to the blockade which had been established by Commodore LAMBERT, the "Minute" seeks to justify that act by reference to the instructions he had received.

"The act of the Governor of Rangoon," says Lord DALHOUSIE, "in refusing admittance to the deputation, under the circumstances of insolence and contumely which I have described, and in withholding all amends for his conduct, was rightly viewed by the Commodore as a rejection of the demand he had been sent to make. *He at once established the blockade which had been enjoined as the consequence of such rejection.*"*

Here we have it laid down, that the refusal of redress by the Governor of Rangoon was rightly considered as a justification of the hostile proceedings which followed. The following extract from the original instructions given to Commodore LAMBERT for his guidance, by the Governor-General, will show that the very opposite course was previously enjoined:—

"The refusal of the Governor of Rangoon," says Lord DALHOUSIE (October 31st), "to accede to a demand of reparation for a distinct breach of the treaty with Ava, if it should be upheld by his Government, would doubtless entitle the Government of India to proceed to exact reparation by force of arms, or to inflict such punishment on the Burmese State as circumstances might seem to require. *But the Government of India could not, with justice, proceed to such extremities, until it had communicated with the Court of Ava, respecting the conduct of its servant, the Governor of Rangoon, and had thereby afforded it an opportunity of disavowing his acts, and of making the reparation which he had refused to concede.*"†

And on a subsequent occasion, on the receipt of the intelligence that Commodore LAMBERT, having determined to hold no communication with the first Governor of Rangoon, had sent a letter to that effect to the King of Ava, the Governor-General again enjoined that the blockade of the Burmese ports should be made contingent only upon his receiving an unfavourable answer from the King:—

"*If the King's reply should be unfavourable,*" says Lord DALHOUSIE (December 27th), "*the only course we can pursue, which would not, on the one hand, involve a dangerous submission to injury, or, on the other*

* P. 65.

† P. 13.

hand, precipitate us prematurely into a war which moderate counsels may still enable us with honour to avert, *will be to establish a blockade* of the two rivers at Rangoon and Moulmein, by which the great mass of the traffic of the Burmese empire is understood to pass.”*

Nothing could be more clear or consistent with international law than these instructions for the guidance of the British commander; but no sooner does he set them aside, and begin hostilities in retaliation for the alleged acts of the Governor of Rangoon, than the Governor-General tries to justify him by an illogical deduction from his own previous despatch.—“He at once established the blockade which had been enjoined as the consequence of such rejection” (by the Governor of Rangoon) says Lord DALHOUSIE. There was, I repeat, no authority given to the Commodore to blockade the ports in retaliation for any act of the Governor of Rangoon,—*his instructions were precisely the reverse.*

I have before alluded to Colonel BOGLE who, at the time of the rupture at Rangoon, filled the post of Commissioner in the Tenasserim Provinces, bordering on the Burmese territory. His chief residence was on the Salween river, at the port of Moulmein, nearly opposite to, and a few miles distant from Martaban, one of the principal Burmese ports. The letters of this officer are almost the only part of the correspondence which an Englishman ought to read without blushing. In perusing his despatches, it is impossible not to detect, in spite of his official reserve, and the restraints which a sense of subordination imposed on him, that he had no sympathy for the violent proceedings which were being carried on in the neighbouring port of Rangoon, and that if the affair had been left in his hands, it might have been amicably settled in a few hours. In style as well as matter, his letters present a striking contrast to many of the loose and desultory compositions which accompany them; and his conduct appears to have been characterised by an energy and a forbearance which bespeak at once a humane and yet resolute man.

At the commencement of the misunderstanding with the Burmese, Colonel BOGLE was instructed by the Government at Calcutta to prepare against a sudden attack upon his Tenasserim

frontiers.* But far from any hostile attempts having been made on his territory, the Burmese authorities seem to have shown the most nervous anxiety to avoid a collision. On the 30th January, 1852, Colonel BOGLE informs the government of India that two messengers had come over to him from Martaban, bringing a letter to say that a party of British police had attacked the Burmese village of Pagat, that the people had driven back the police ; but being apprehensive that a more serious collision might take place, the Burmese authorities earnestly requested that measures might be taken to repress any aggressive disposition on the part of the British, and to preserve peace.

" It appearing to me," continues Colonel BOGLE, " from the tone of the Burmese authorities, that the intelligence they had sent was true, and that they were actuated by a very friendly feeling, and not having received any report of the matter from any other source, I thought that the best way of settling the affair was to get into a steamer, and proceed to the spot at once." In proceeding up the river, " *the steamer*," (continues Colonel BOGLE) " *took the ground close to the Martaban fortification, and remained fast for twenty minutes, within short musket-shot of the walls. The place was well filled with men, and I observed a couple of guns mounted on the ramparts; but no advantage was taken of the steamer being aground*; and we remained unmolested until the tide rose, and the *Phlegethon* proceeded on her voyage."† Let the reader bear in mind, that this incident, illustrating so strongly the pacific disposition of the Burmese, occurred three weeks after Commodore LAMBERT had seized the King's ship, and declared the whole coast of Burmah in a state of blockade, *and whilst Martaban itself was actually blockaded by a couple of gun-boats* :—

" Nor did the Burmese," continues Colonel BOGLE, " appear to entertain any fears that we would annoy them ; the wharf near their large pagoda, and their walls on which, when passing a fortnight before, I did not see a single soul, were now crowded with men sitting quietly looking at us ; the red flag—emblem of war—was flying arrogantly enough at many points all along the line ; but women were also to be seen seated along the bank, which indicated perfect confidence that the steamer had not suddenly appeared within pistol-shot of the place with the intention of harassing any one."‡

The next day at noon, the steamer reached Pagat, her place of destination, when, to the astonishment of Colonel BOGLE, the first person that put off in a boat, was the identical Martaban official, who had the day before brought the letter, respecting the collision at Pagat, over to Moulmein. I cannot better describe what followed than in Colonel BOGLE's own clear and concise language:—

“ From him I learnt, that during the night he had been dispatched by the Governor of Martaban, to summon the chief of Pagat to his presence, and to take every possible measure to prevent hostilities ; and he assured me, that having pulled all night, he had arrived that morning, and had, in conformity with his instructions, dispatched the chief to Martaban, and caused it to be intimated to all the inhabitants of Pagat and the neighbourhood, that they were to conduct themselves in the most peaceful manner possible, and to do nothing that could be offensive to the English authorities ; and he begged that the people on the British side might receive similar orders.

“ He was immediately assured that I had no other desire than that all should remain quiet and peaceful, and, as a proof of my reluctance to avail myself of the power at my command, I directed all the boats which had been taken from Pagat, to be cast adrift from the stern of the *Phlegethon*, and restored to the Burmese, at the same time administering a stern warning to the recipients, that if the people of Pagat, who are notorious robbers, put a foot on the British side of the river, under the present state of affairs, they might chance to receive a less agreeable visit from the steamer, at whose crew and armament they gazed with considerable interest.

“ Having settled this matter to the entire satisfaction of the Burmese functionary, and received his earnest protestations of a desire to remain at peace, I visited several of our police ports and villages, where Lieutenant HOPKINSON issued such orders as seemed proper ; we then returned towards Moulmein, but again got aground under the walls of Martaban, and remained six hours hard and fast, within pistol-range of the shore ; during the time (it was night) we could distinctly see crowds of Burmese around their watch-fires, but except just when the steam was blowing off with the remarkable noise which it always makes, they took no notice of us.

“ Now, coupling all the circumstances of this trip with the recent communications from the Governors of Rangoon and Martaban, noticed in my letter of the 27th instant, it appears to me probable that the pacific tone assumed by the Burmese is in consequence of orders from the Governor of Rangoon, to whom Martaban is now subordinate, or it may be dictated by weakness, and a backward state of preparation.”*

Remembering that at the moment when this despatch was penned at Moulmein, Commodore LAMBERT was actually engaged in hostilities with the Burmese at Rangoon, (seventy miles distant) that he, the accredited representative of British power in Burmah, was forwarding to the government of India, accusations against the Burmese of the most hostile designs—bearing these circumstances in mind, it is apparent how strong must have been the sense of justice which prompted Colonel BOGLE, even at the risk of being charged with travelling out of his province, to bring to the knowledge of the Governor-General of India, the above facts, showing the pacific disposition of the Burmese authorities. This feeling was still more strongly evinced in the events which followed.

On the 7th February, two Burmese officials, called *Tsceikays*, with "gold umbrellas," crossed over from Martaban to Moulmein, with a letter from the King of Ava to the Governor-General of India, which had just arrived in eleven days direct from the Capital, with a request from the Governor of Martaban that Colonel BOGLE would transmit it to Calcutta. After delivering the letter, inclosed in an ivory case and a red velvet cover, with all proper ceremony, "they entered into some discussion on the present state of affairs, and expressed the great anxiety of their government, that the existing differences should be amicably arranged, and the Treaty of Yandaboo maintained.*

In perusing the following account of what passed at this interview, as given in the despatch of Colonel BOGLE, it will be well to bear in mind the delicate position in which he was placed. The letter from the government at Ava to the Governor-General of India, was written in reply to the despatch sent by Commodore LAMBERT, from Rangoon, on the 7th January, apprising them for the first time, of the rupture which had occurred the day before, and offering to be the medium for transmitting any explanation or answer from the Court of Ava, to the Government of India. The ministers of the "Golden Foot," feeling puzzled on learning that Commodore LAMBERT, instead of, as they had supposed, being on his way back to Calcutta, with the friendly answer to the Governor-General's letter, was blockading Rangoon, and holding

possession of the King's ship, they determined naturally enough to forward their next letter through Colonel BOGLE. The latter although he was evidently too conscientious to conceal his conviction of the pacific disposition of the Burmese, yet felt bound by a sense of official duty to avoid the appearance of favouring the cause of those who were regarded at that moment as in a state of actual hostility against the government under which he served; and hence in the following account of the interview, an admonitory rebuke of the Tseetkays, and a vindication of the authority of Commodore LAMBERT fall from him, which however, whilst leaving his own opinion as apparent as ever, serves only to bring out more strongly the repugnance of the Burmese to enter into further relations with that officer:—

“ They were most particularly desirous,” says Colonel BOGLE, “ that further negotiations should not be conducted through Rangoon ; and that I would do all in my power to procure a reply from the Governor-General, and transmit it through Martaban ; in reply to which I told them, that I could do nothing more than send on the King's letter ; that if an answer came to me I would, of course, forward it to Martaban with all dispatch ; but that I thought it more probable it would be sent through Commodore LAMBERT and the shorter route of Rangoon ; and that I had no control whatever in a matter of the kind. They did not seem at all pleased at this, but at once suggested that I might at least enable them to communicate direct with the Indian Government, by sending the Principal Assistant Commissioner (Lieutenant HOPKINSON) with them to Calcutta, in which case they were prepared to do without negotiators, and go and deliver the letter themselves. Of course I declined to depute my Assistant with them, but offered them a passage in the steamer.

“ They expressed great regret that affairs had not been settled peaceably at Rangoon, and that the King's ship had been taken ; but I clearly pointed out to them, that I had no power to enter upon the discussion of matters connected with that place ; and explained to them, that, if there was any sincerity in their professions of a desire for peace, they should shape their conduct more in accordance with them ; and that if their Government really desired a settlement of differences, it should lose no time in forwarding proper persons with sufficient powers to Commodore LAMBERT, with whom alone negotiations could be carried on.

“ To this the Tseetkays expressed some dislike, and strongly dwelt upon the circumstance, that everything having taken an unsatisfactory turn at Rangoon, it would be much better to forget all that had occurred there, and to begin the negotiations at the beginning again. I took

some pains to have it clearly explained to them, that I had no power to do more than simply forward the King's letter ; but that, as regarded all negotiations, the duty of conducting them had been assigned to Commodore LAMBERT, and it was to him that their Government must address itself ; but the more I dwelt upon the propriety of following this course of proceeding, the more they urged the expediency of setting aside all that had already occurred, and beginning anew.

"The circumstance of the King of Burmah having sent a letter to the Governor-General at all, and with such haste, is remarkable ; and that he should have chosen this route, probably under the supposition that, with a blockade established, there might be difficulties on the Rangoon side, would indicate much anxiety to obtain an early reply ; and from what the Tseetkays said, there is no doubt that the answer will be looked for with great impatience. I may as well mention, that on my alluding to the stoppage of trade and intercourse as one of the evils that had already overtaken them, consequent on the acts of their rulers, the Tseetkays expressed the most perfect indifference to that, and treated it as a matter of no moment whatever."

Colonel BOGLE forwarded immediately the letter to Commodore LAMBERT at Rangoon, with a request that it might be dispatched by a steamer to Calcutta. "The circumstance," says he, in his letter to the Commodore, "of the Burmese Government having sent a letter to the Governor-General at all, and the speed with which it has come, would certainly indicate a desire that hostilities may be averted, at least for the present ; and the very convenient opportunity which this letter will afford the Indian Government of categorically detailing its demands and intentions, induces me to attach more importance to it than it would otherwise, perhaps, deserve."*

The King's letter was written to bring to the knowledge of the Governor-General the events which had occurred at Rangoon, and with which the reader is already familiar. Considering that the seat of government is nearly five hundred miles from the sea-coast, and that the means of obtaining correct intelligence are very inferior to those in countries where the publicity of the press checks the reports of local functionaries, the occurrences seem to have been known with remarkable accuracy by the Burmese Ministry. This may probably be attributed to the high rank of the Commissioners deputed to meet Commodore LAMBERT, who, we now learn for the first time, were "the Perpetual Privy Councillor,

MAHAMENG GYAM, and the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, MENGGYEE MENGTENG RAZA.”* After narrating the occurrences which led to the rupture at Rangoon, and the seizure of the King’s ship by Commodore LAMBERT, the Burmese Ministers conclude with the following very natural inquiry:—

“This communication is now made with the view of eliciting, in reply, the intentions of the English Government; and it cannot be determined whether it has deputed Commodore LAMBERT simply to dispose of the question relating to the merchants, or whether he has been sent to begin by an attack, which should have the effect of bringing on hostilities between the two countries.”†

Before this letter reached Calcutta, Lord DALHOUSIE had, as we have seen, determined upon dispatching an armament to the coast of Burmah, and had written his long “Minute,” containing the reasons for the course he was about to take.

His Lordship’s reply to the King of Ava’s communication contains merely a repetition of the arguments in the “Minute;”—there is, again, the same uncandid evasion of the real question at issue, the seizure of the King’s ship,—and once more we have a lengthened dissertation upon the breach of etiquette on the occasion of the visit of the deputation to the Governor’s palace. Upon this latter point the Governor-General is really unfashionable; for he denies to the Governor of Rangoon the privilege which every body in “good society” in London, if not in Calcutta, exercises every day. To be able to answer “not at home” with a good grace is one of the qualifications for the hall-porter of a lady patroness of Almack’s; but who ever heard of such an answer being made a *casus belli* between Carlton Terrace and Belgrave Square, or even the ground for an exchange of “Minutes,” or any thing more warlike than a few visiting cards? The Governor-General has admitted that the informal visit attempted by the officers composing the deputation might have given a plausible pretext to the Governor of Rangoon for declining to receive them;‡ but he complains of the mode in which it was done. Now I humbly submit, that no course less insulting could possibly have been adopted. Mr. CRAWFURD, in the interesting account of his mission to Ava, informs us, that owing to the great heat of the

* P. 69.

† P. 70.

‡ P. 65.

weather, all classes in Burmah, from the King to the meanest peasant, suspend their labours and seek repose in the middle of the day. To call upon a person of rank at noon on business, without a previous arrangement, is as much an act of *mauvais ton* as if a Burmese deputation (and I think they would do wisely to send one) were to come to England to see the President of the Board of Control, and insist on an interview at nine o'clock in the evening, when he was at dinner. In such a case he would be "not at home." Whether the answer were "not at home," or "asleep," it would be deprived of all offensiveness if it were in harmony with the custom of the country. In making use of the excuse which the hour of the day afforded him, the Governor of Rangoon shewed a well-bred desire to avoid offering an affront to his ill-timed visitors.

One feels painfully affected, almost to humiliation, at reading page after page of such disquisitions as the following, from the pen of a Governor-General of India, in State papers, upon every sentence of which hangs the solemn question of peace or war:—

"When Commodore LAMBERT," says Lord DALHOUSIE to the King of Ava, "on the arrival of the new Governor, proposed to renew negotiations relative to the merchants who had been oppressed, the Governor intimated his readiness to receive, at any time, a communication from Commodore LAMBERT upon the subject. On the following day, a letter written on behalf of the British Government, was addressed by the Commodore to the Governor of Rangoon. Although the present Governor and his predecessor had not observed the respect which was due, nor the custom of their own country, and had sent their letters by the hands of men of no rank or consideration whatever, yet these persons were not rejected by the Commodore. And when he dispatched his letter to the Governor of Rangoon, it was sent, not by the hands of any such inconsiderable persons, but by the officer next in rank to himself, accompanied by officers of the army and of the fleet.

" Yet the Governor of Rangoon presumed to refuse all admittance to these officers, bearing a letter to him on the part of the British Government.

" He not only presumed to refuse to them admittance, but he offered to them insult and indignity. The Deputy Governor did not approach them, as your servants have falsely reported to your Majesty. No officer was deputed to them. They were approached only by the lowest; they were compelled to remain beyond the door; and were publicly subjected to disrespect and insolence, such as would have been

regarded as ignominious by the meanest subordinate in your servant's Durbar."*

The answer to this is, that the Governor's visitors were informed by his servants that he was "asleep," which, between gentlemen in Burmah, was sufficient to avoid unpleasant consequences; and between men of sense and of masculine characters, whether Burmese or British, who did not want to quarrel, it might have sufficed as an excuse for both parties to keep the peace.

The letter of the Governor-General, after announcing to His Majesty the formidable preparations that were going on, to "enforce his rights and vindicate his power,"—preparations which, he added, would not be suspended in consequence of the receipt of the King's letter, concludes with the following ultimatum :—

"1. Your Majesty, disavowing the acts of the present Governor of Rangoon, shall, by the hands of your Ministers, express regret that Captain FISHBOURNE, and the British officers who accompanied him, were exposed to insult at the hand of your servants at Rangoon, on the 6th of January last.

"2. In satisfaction of the claims of the two captains who suffered exactions from the late Governor of Rangoon; in compensation for the loss of property which British merchants may have suffered in the burning of that city by the acts of the present Governor; and in consideration of the expenses of preparation for war, your Majesty will agree to pay, and will pay at once, ten lacs of rupees (one hundred thousand pounds) to the Government of India.

"3. Your Majesty will direct that an accredited Agent, to be appointed in conformity with the VIIth Article of the Treaty of Yandaboo, and to reside at Rangoon, shall be received by your Majesty's servants there; and shall, at all times, be treated with the respect due to the Representative of the British Government.

"4. Your Majesty will direct the removal of the present Governor of Rangoon, whose conduct renders it impossible that the Government of India should consent to any official intercourse with him.

"If, without further delay, negotiation, or correspondence, these conditions shall be consented to, and shall be fulfilled on, or before, the 1st day of April next, hostile operations shall be stayed, peace between the States shall be renewed, and the King's ship shall be restored.

"But if—untaught by former experience; forgetful of the irresistible power of the British arms in India; and heedless of the many additional proofs that have been given of its might, in the successful fall of the powerful Sovereigns of Bhurtpore, of Scinde, of the Sikhs, and of

many other Princes, since last the Burman Rulers vainly attempted to resist the British troops in war—the King of Ava shall unwisely refuse the *just and lenient conditions* which are now set before him, the British Government will have no alternative but immediate war.

“ The guilt and the consequences of war will rest upon the head of the Ruler of Ava.”

Let it be borne in mind that up to this moment the King had been charged with no unfriendly act towards the British Government. His former letter, and the disgrace of the Governor of Rangoon, inflicted at our instance, had elicited the approbation of the Government of India, and of the British Ministry. Nay, in the very letter before us, the following tribute is paid to the “justice and sagacity” of the King :—

“ The reply which your Majesty addressed to the letter from the Government of India was, in all respects, worthy of a just and sagacious Ruler. It admitted the justice of the claims which had been advanced, directed the removal of the Governor of Rangoon, and promised redress by the hands of a new Governor fully armed with powers to afford it.

“ That redress has not been granted by your Majesty’s servant at Rangoon ; on the contrary, gross and repeated insults have since been offered by him to the British Government, in the person of its officers, and every amende has been evaded or refused.”*

Let it also be borne in mind that in retaliation for the insult alleged to have been offered by His Majesty’s servant at Rangoon, we had already carried off the royal ship, and that the above ultimatum was the reply to an inquiry from the King, as to the authority of Commodore LAMBERT, to commit that act of violence, but to which inquiry no answer was given :—bearing all this in mind, there could be but one result expected or intended from this high-handed appeal to force against the claims of reason and justice. The Governor-General’s ultimatum was forwarded to Colonel BOGLE at Moulmein ; the same “ Tseetkays ” crossed over from Martaban to receive the despatch ; they “ appeared to be much grieved”† at its purport ; it was at once forwarded to the capital, but no answer was returned.

It is no part of my plan to give any account of the war which

* P. 74.

† P. 80. ¶

followed; respecting which some particulars will be found in the "Further papers relating to hostilities with Burmah," presented to Parliament during the present session. A war it can hardly be called, a rout, a massacre, or a visitation, would be a more appropriate term. A fleet of wa²-steamers and other vessels took up their position in the river, and on the 11th April, 1852, *being Easter Sunday*, they commenced operations by bombarding both the Rangoon and Dallah shores. Everything yielded like toy-work beneath the terrible broadsides of our ships. The Burmese had about as fair a chance of success in contending against our steamers, rockets, detonating shells, and heavy ordnance, of which they were destitute, as one of their Peguc ponies would have had in running a race with a locomotive. Whole armies were put to the rout, with scarcely the loss of a man on our side; and fortified places, when scaled by a few sailors or marines, were found entirely abandoned. There is neither honour nor glory to be gained, when a highly civilized nation arrays the powers of mechanical and chemical science against a comparatively feeble, because ignorant and barbarous people. There is small room for the display of courage where there is little risk; and even muscular force has not much to do with a combat, the result of which depends almost entirely on the labours and discoveries of the workshop and laboratory. There is no doubt then as to the result of the Burmese war. Our troops may suffer from the climate, the water, or provisions; but the enemy has no power to prevent their subduing and annexing the whole or any part of the country. *But success however complete will not obliterate one fact respecting the origin of the war.*

God can alone know the motives of man. But looking back upon the acts of Commodore LAMBERT, I must say that had his object in visiting Rangoon been to provoke hostilities, his conduct, in first precipitating a quarrel, and then committing an act of violence certain to lead to a deadly collision, could not have been more ingeniously framed to promote that object.

It has been urged in vindication of Lord DALHOUSIE's part in these proceedings, that owing to the anomalous relations which exist between the Royal Navy and the Government of India, he

had no power to compel Commodore LAMBERT to obey his orders.* This is true, and is illustrative of the absurdity of the double government of India. But this should have induced Lord DALHOUSIE in the first place to have selected another envoy. India has a navy of its own. But where was the necessity for sending a squadron at all, until after a demand for redress had been made through a civilian, or at least a Company's officer, who, like Colonel BOGLE, understood the customs of the country; and the more especially so, as it was the first complaint that had been officially presented to the Government of Burmah? Besides, it was in the power of his lordship, after the first proofs of Commodore LAMBERT's rashness, to have withdrawn the instructions with which he sailed from Calcutta. Instead of which, not content with silently acquiescing in the proceedings of the Commodore, he adopted and justified his acts, with the full knowledge that he thereby shared his responsibility.

But there are other and very serious aspects to this business. Commodore LAMBERT, whilst owning no allegiance to the Government of India, made war upon the Burmese with the Queen's ships, without having had any orders from the British Admiralty to enter upon hostilities—and the question naturally arises, to what superior authority was he responsible for the discreet fulfilment of the task he had undertaken? Why, in a strictly professional sense, to nobody. Acting under no instructions from the Admiralty, and standing towards the Government of India "in the position of the commander of an allied force,"† he was virtually irresponsible for the proper performance of the special duty which he had volunteered upon. It must be admitted that a state of things more ingeniously contrived to enable us to involve ourselves in wars, without the unpleasantness of feeling accountable for the consequences, could hardly be imagined.

But the "anomaly" does not end here. The most important point remains to be noticed. These wars, got up by a Queen's

* This subject was referred to in the House of Lords, and the "anomaly" pointed out by Lords ELLENBOROUGH and BROUGHTON, the latter of whom stated, that before leaving the Board of Control, he had received a letter from Lord DALHOUSIE, expressing a hope that it would be remedied under the new Charter Act.—(See *Hansard*, March 25th, 1852.)

† Lord ELLENBOROUGH, House of Lords, 25th March, 1852.

officer in the teeth of instructions to the contrary from the Governor-General of India, whose orders he is no more bound to obey than those of the Emperor of China, *are carried on at the expense of the people of India*. Hence the difficulty of rousing the attention of the English public to the subject. We have an army of twenty thousand men now in Burmah, who have seized a territory as large as England, and their proceedings have attracted less notice from the press and public of this kingdom than has the entry of a few thousand Russian troops into the, to us, far more inaccessible Danubian Provinces. And the reason is obvious. The *bill* for the payment of the cost of the Burmese war is presented not to us, but to the unhappy ryots of Hindostan. To aggravate this injustice in the present case, it must be remembered that the war originated in a dispute between the Governor of Rangoon and the captains of a couple of English merchant ships. What exclusive interest had the half-naked peasant of Bengal in the settlement of the claims of Captains SHEPPARD and LEWIS, that he should alone be made to bear the expense of the war which grew out of them? And not merely the cost of the war, heavy as it will be, but the far more serious burden to be entailed upon our older possessions in India, from the permanent occupation or annexation of the whole or a large part of the Burmese empire. To the latter evil, growing out of our insatiable love of territorial aggrandisement, we shall probably be wilfully blind, until awoken from a great national illusion by some rude shock to the fabric of our Indian finance.

It is now placed beyond a doubt, for we have it on the evidence of the East India Company themselves, that our recent acquisitions of territory in the East have been unproductive. Scinde, Sattara, and the Punjab, which have been annexed at the cost of so many crimes, are one and all entailing a charge upon the Indian revenue. Yet these countries are, as it were, within the basin of Hindostan, and lie contiguous to our possessions. But Burmah is no *part* of Hindostan. The people are semi-Chinese; and as a proof how little intercourse we have had with them, it may be mentioned, that when Lord DALHOUSIE wished to print some proclamations to be distributed in Pegu, it was found that there was no press in Calcutta where the Burmese character could be printed.

The distance from Calcutta to Rangoon by sea is as great as from London to Hamburg; and it must be borne in mind that troops in Burmah will be entitled to extra pay for being stationed "beyond sea," which will add much to the expense of its occupation.

But I need not press this view of the subject; for it is avowed on all hands that the acquisition of territory in Burmah is not desirable: and Lord DALHOUSIE recorded in express terms, at the outset of the contest, his opinion, that "conquest in Burmah would be a calamity second only to the calamity of war."^{*} And when contemplating the possibility of being obliged to extend his military occupation even to the capital, he says, that, in such a contingency, "the Government of India can no longer regard its financial position with the confidence it is now warranted in entertaining," and that instead of surplus revenue, we must in that case expect to hear of "exhausted cash balances, and re-opened loans."[†]

Yet it is not a little perplexing to find in the teeth of all these solemn disavowals of a desire for seizing more territory, that the Governor-General's policy aims directly at the annexation of Pegu, and will admit of no other terms; and if "a real necessity for advance" should arise, then, in spite of its ruinous consequences, "let us," says his Lordship, "fulfil our destiny, which there, as elsewhere, will have compelled us forward in spite of our wishes."[‡] or, in plain English, let us take the whole of Burmah, even if it should prove ruinous to our finances, because it is our destiny.

Now, if we are to have credit for the sincerity of all this, what will be said of its statesmanship? I put aside the pretence of "destiny," which is not to be tolerated as a plea amongst Christians, however valid it may be in Mahometan casuistry. But where lies the necessity for annexing any part of Burmah, if it be not our interest to do so? I find but one argument put forth, but it is repeated in a variety of forms:—we are told, that if we do not seize a portion of the enemy's territory we shall be disparaged in his eyes. In other words, unless the Government of India, with three hundred thousand troops, and backed by the whole power of the British empire, pursue a policy

* Further papers, p. 44. † Ibid, p. 87. ‡ P. 93, Further papers.

injurious to its own interests, it will suffer in the estimation of the Burmese, who, we are told, have in the present war "betrayed a total want of enterprise, courage, power, and resource; large bodies of them retiring at the mere sight of a steamer, or in the presence of a few Europeans as soon as they are landed."* Admitting, I repeat, the sincerity of this argument, what shall we say of the policy which it seeks to justify? Lord DALHOUSIE begins with a claim on the Burmese for less than a thousand pounds; which is followed by the additional demand of an apology from the Governor of Rangoon for the insult offered to our officers; next, his terms are raised to one hundred thousand pounds, and an apology from the king's ministers; then follows the invasion of the Burmese territory; when, suddenly, all demands for pecuniary compensation and apologies cease, and his Lordship is willing to accept the cession of Pegue as a "compensation" and "reparation" for the past, whilst at the same time he pens long minutes to prove how calamitous it will be to us to annex that province to our Indian empire! Conceding, I say, the *bond fides* of all this—ought not we to advertise in the *Times*, for a Governor-General of India who can collect a debt of a thousand pounds, without annexing a territory which will be ruinous to our finances?

But the fact is, and the sooner we all know it the better, nobody gives us credit for sincerity when we protest our reluctance to acquire more territory, whilst our actions are thus falsifying all our professions.† Nor, speaking nationally, are we entitled to such credit.

* P. 65.

† That the reader may see how a policy which we declare to be unprofitable to ourselves, in a pecuniary sense, weakens our moral influence in the eyes of other nations, I give the following extract from a speech, delivered by General CASS in the Senate of the United States, December, 1852.

"Another of the native Powers of Hindostan has fallen before the march of a great commercial corporation, and its 8,000,000 or 10,000,000 of people have gone to swell the immense congregation of British subjects in India. And what do you think was the cause of the war which has just ended in the swallowing up of the kingdom of Burmah? The whole history of human contests, since the dispersing of the family of man upon the plains of Shinar, exhibits no such national provocation, followed by such national punishment. Political arithmetic contains no such sum as that which drove England to this unwelcome measure. Had we not the most irrefragable evidence, we might well refuse credence to this story of real rapacity. But the fact is

Public opinion in this country has not hitherto been opposed to an extension of our dominion in the East. On the contrary, it is believed to be profitable to the nation, and all classes are ready to hail with approbation every fresh acquisition of territory, and to reward those conquerors who bring us home title-deeds, no matter I fear, how obtained, to new Colonial possessions. So long as they are believed to be profitable, this spirit will prevail.

But it is not consistent with the supremacy of that moral law, which mysteriously sways the fate of empires, as well as of individuals, that deeds of violence, fraud and injustice, should be committed with permanent profit and advantage. If wrongs are perpetrated in the name, and by the authority of this great country, by its proconsuls or naval commanders in distant quarters of the globe, it is not by throwing the flimsy veil of a "double government" over such transactions, that we shall ultimately escape the penalty attaching to deeds for which we are really responsible. How, or when, the retribution will react upon us, I presume not to say. The rapine in Mexico and Peru was retaliated upon Spain, in the ruin of her finances. In France, the *razzias* of Algeria were repaid by her own troops, in the massacres of the Boulevards, and the savage combats in the streets of Paris. Let us hope that the national conscience, which has before averted from England, by timely atonement and reparation, the punishment due for imperial crimes, will be roused ere it be too late from its lethargy, and put an end to the deeds of violence and injustice which have marked every step of our progress in India.

indisputable, that England went to war with Burmah, and annihilated its political existence, for the non-payment of a disputed demand of £990. So says the London *Times*, the authoritative expositor of the opinions and policy of England. 'To appreciate,' says that impersonation of British feeling, 'correctly the character of this compulsory bargain, the reader must recollect that the sum originally demanded of the Burmese for the indemnification of our injured merchants was £990., and Lord DALHOUSIE's terms, even when the guns of our steamers were pointed against Rangoon, comprehended, in consideration of the expenses of the expedition and of compensation for property, a claim only of £100,000.' Well does it become such a people to preach homilies to other nations upon disinterestedness and moderation."

COBDEN'S PAMPHLET.

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